

A
MARVEL
MONTHLY

THE MAGAZINE OF CINEMA AND TELEVISION FANTASY № 27 60p

STARBURST

THIS ISSUE:

PRODUCER JOHN NATHAN-TURNER ON
THE NEW DR WHO!

EXCLUSIVE REPORT FROM THE USA
THE MAKING OF STARHUNT

THE AUTHOR OF
THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES
RAY BRADBURY
SPEAKS OUT IN A CANDID INTERVIEW

THE FABULOUS FANTASY FILMS OF
RAY HARRYHAUSEN

PLUS

A SPECIAL PREVIEW OF KUBRICK'S

THE SHINING

THE NEW DR WHO



STARHUNT





THE SHINING

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THE NEW DR WHO

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW PRODUCER, JOHN NATHAN-TURNER. SEE PAGE 18.

THE FILMS OF RAY HARRYHAUSEN

A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT THE CAREER OF ONE OF THE GREAT SPECIAL EFFECTS WIZARDS. SEE PAGE 30.

PREHISTORIC SEA-GIANT RAGES AGAINST CITY!

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THEY COULDN'T ESCAPE THE TERROR!
AND NEITHER WILL YOU!

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STARBURST LETTERS

BACK ISSUES

Whilst browsing through my latest copy of *Starburst* (No 24) I wondered where I could get the editions I had sadly missed, as most newsagents in my town have never heard of *Starburst*. (I've placed an order in one though and hopefully I'll get them all from now on). So I thought I would write to Marvel Comics and ask you if you sold back-issues. The particular copies I'm looking for are Nos 1-8, 12, 13, 15, 22. If you do sell these particular editions I was wondering what price they would be.

David Crawford,
Johnstone,
Renfrewshire.

Back issues of Starburst are available, David. They can be obtained from Marvel Mail Order Service, 191 Spital Road, Maldon, Essex at a cost of 60p each. But be warned, only issues 1-3, 5, 12-19, 21-27 are in stock. All others are sold out. Please add 10% to the value of each order to cover postage and packing and make all cheques and/or POs

payable to Marvel Mail Order Service.

FOCUS! FOCUS!

I hope you print this and I hope someone comments on it. Every time I go to the cinema, the picture is out of focus.

No, it's not my eyes, and having projected films myself I know a projectionist's job is not difficult.

Most cinemas are too large for the shouting of "Focus!" to have any effect and appeals to the usherettes produce nothing.

So... are there any projectionists reading this? I am accusing you of lack of professionalism.

Aalo Stenikk,
London W12.

Any one care to reply?

BEVERLY GARLAND FAN CLUB

I recently bought a couple of issues of your magazine at a local

store and was quite impressed with your efforts. Let's just hope we continue to get *Starburst* here in the States!

I particularly enjoyed the article *Fabulous Fantasy Females* in issue 20, however, I was most disappointed in that you failed to mention actress Beverly Garland. Beverly has appeared in many science fiction/fantasy films (Not of This Earth, Twice Told Tales, I Conquered the World, Pretty Poison, etc.) and has been a guest star on numerous genre television shows (Twilight Zone, Thriller, Planet of the Apes, Six Million Dollar Man, etc.). If this sounds like a promotion for Miss Garland, you're right! Beverly has been a dear friend for many years and I have been the president of her fan club for almost five years.

Perhaps some of your readers would be interested in our club for Beverly. Members receive 3 Journals with photos, and 8x10 personally autographed photo of Beverly, film & television credit list, biography, and a photo membership card. Our Journals average 50 pages in length and Beverly gives the club her full support and co-operation. We have a few overseas members in our organisation and are always

interested in increasing our ranks! Anyone who would like to join our club may send for further information to:

Carl Del Vecchio, President,
The Beverly Garland Club,
151 East Joseph Street,
Moonachie, New Jersey 07074,
U.S.A.

Continued success with your fine publication, I just hope we continue to have access to *Starburst* here in the U.S.

Carl Del Vecchio,
New Jersey,
U.S.A.

And don't forget to enclose an International Reply Coupon with all enquiries.

REBELS JOIN THE CLUB

Did you know that *Jacobs* biscuits have started selling their *Club* biscuits to the Rebel Alliance?

If you or any of your colleagues disbelieve this, see Mr Brogan and watch closely the tin that Mark Hamill takes to Dagobah. You can't see anything the first time he opens it to take

BROSNAN DEFENSIVE

I was very upset to read a number of reactionary and single-minded letters in the correspondence column of *Starburst* 25, regarding one of your writers, John Brosnan. How, and by what right, do these people attack the best reviewer at work on your magazine?

Especially irritating was one particular passage in a letter from C & J Hindle: "... are your reviews not meant to provide readers with a reasonable guide on which films are worth seeing and which are not?" In answer I say: NO! They most certainly are not! The one reason I have always enjoyed reading *Starburst* is that the reviews are not just a neutral

collection of pointless facts about a picture; "X has previously starred in..." and "Y has also directed..." 'The Purple People Eater From Pluto' cost over Z million dollars to make! ... etc ... etc ...; the reviews in your magazine have always been adult and precise, giving synopsis, information, but primarily expert opinion! And if anyone doubts Brosnan's qualifications as an expert then they most certainly have not read *Movie Magic* or *Future Tense*, two of the most definitive and enjoyable books on their respective fields of cinema that I have ever read.

If C & J Hindle, and all your other "outraged" readers, want to read complimentary waffle about a film, written by opinionless, soulless zombies, then I suggest they pick up a copy of *Film Review*, or *Photoplay*, or even

better *Starlog*, the most expensively packaged trash on the newsstands!

Of course a review of a film is not the be-all and end-all to be said about that film, it is merely the opinion and thoughts of one man on that film, designed so that readers may react and comment upon those thoughts. Brosnan does his job well... And I think the editorial staff at *Starburst* are well aware of this; he has reviewed all the major genre films of the last few years, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Star Trek - The Motion Picture*, *The Black Hole*, *Alien*, *Moonraker*, *Superman The Movie* and *Close Encounters*.

I look forward to seeing more of John Brosnan's writing for *Starburst* in the future.

Paul Richmond,
Derlington,
Co. Durham.

I am a great fan of your magazine and prefer it to all its American rivals. But I was appalled at the amount of narrow mindedness in *Starburst* 25's letters column. Personally I enjoyed *The Empire Strikes Back*, but I felt Mr Brosnan's review was honest and pointed out some true errors. This is a democratic country and I feel Mr Brosnan has a perfect right to voice his opinions even if they contradict the majority's.

Incidentally, I feel a double page poster is nice every couple of months.

Silas Amos,
Little Longdale,
Cumbria.

Well said, Silas! It has never been Starburst's policy to interfere with the opinions of its contributors. Just as Starburst never interferes with the opinions of its readers.

WE WANT RAY HARRYHAUSEN!

It has not escaped my notice that you folks at Starburst have yet to do a feature on the master of special effects, Ray Harryhausen. Surely with credits behind him like Jason and the Argonauts, Twenty Million Miles to Earth and The Golden Voyage of Sinbad he deserves some coverage in your fine periodical?

Perhaps you will consider rectifying this situation as soon as possible?

Stephen Kelly,
London E3.

If not sooner, Stevel You'll find an extensive retrospective on the career of Ray Harryhausen beginning on page 30 in this very issue. And in case you haven't been paying attention we'd like to point out that Ray Harryhausen is the Guest of Honour at the Marvel Comic Film and Fantasy Convention this year (see page 37, this issue).



out his "dinner" (which bears a remarkable resemblance to a trifle sponge!) But the second time he opens it, pay close attention to the contents. Because in the bottom left hand corner is the biscuit.

Wandy Scott (15) &
Selina Heniff (13),
London SE22.

Thanks for the information, Wendy and Selina. It's amazing just how trivial trivia can get, isn't it? Has anyone got any more fascinating snippets like that?

to make. In issue 25, Met Irvine's Record World. He reviews soundtrack of Star Trek in which he states that this is Jerry Goldsmith's second entry into the world of sf. The first being Alien. But alas he has made a mistake. What about Logan's Run, Capricorn One, Come, Boys from Brazil (the last two being classed as sf) and lest but not least Planet of the Apes?

A.J. Meadows,
Pemberton,
Wigan.

What do you have to say about that, Mat? Mat? Where are you, Mat? Gone again...

RECORD WORLD COMPLAINT

This is the first time I've ever written to any form of mag. I am an sf fan, and have been for the last 27 years since the age of five. I've read a lot of mags in my time. Yours is one of the best on the scene, keep the good work up. I know that there are hundreds of films that haven't been touched yet. However I have a complaint

THE BRADBURY CHRONICLES

How about a review of The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury?

And RSO Records said that The Empire Strikes Back Story Album will be released on August 18th.

Please can you tell me is the film, The Black Hole, featured on a story album?

John Maguire,
Bell Green,
Coventry.

Sorry, John. Can't help you with the Black Hole story album. But if there is one, we at Starburst haven't heard about it yet! As for Bradbury on The Martian Chronicles, turn quickly to page 42! How's that?

THE CHRONIC CHRONICLES

Ray Bradbury once penned a classic science fiction story concerning man's eventual colonization of Mars. He entitled it *The Martian Chronicles*. If done properly this could have become a strong contender for 2001: A Space Odyssey's title. But after watching through two episodes of the television version that thought goes straight into the window.

Before I saw this I firmly believed that special effects had

reached the pits in Blaka's 7. But not anymore. Compared to *Chronicles* they're refreshing. How the Americans in collusion with English and German backers could waste thousands of dollars on producing such a monstrosity is beyond belief. The sequence where we see Martian sandships sliding along the Martian landscape in pursuit of a multi-coloured cowboy literally had me in fits. Some of the matte work is good. But the wires holding the pathetic spaceships from falling clumsily to the linoleum are as plain as daylight. I could go on and on with criticism: about the show but I'll just make reference to my favourite scene: At the start of Episode 2 the narrator explains to us how a vast starfleet was dispatched from Earth to Mars and how the first settlers build homes there. We see Rock Hudson and some of his friends huddled around a table studying plans for a place to be called First Town. Then up on the viewer we see conventional yellow bulldozers digging away mountains of earth with a blue sky overhead. Now that scene really made me think how lucky it is to be able to drive a bulldozer. After all I suppose you stand more of a chance of reaching Mars.

Mind you who can blame the actors? Poor Rock strolls through the show looking totally lost and uncomfortable. You have to give the cast some sympathy. They have to speak the lines.

If sci-fi continues in this tradition it will be killed off completely. Bring Back Star Trek! Stephen Woodward, Runcorn, Cheshire.

Send all comments to:
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Jedwin House,
205-211 Kantish Tow Road,
London, NW5.

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THINGS TO COME

CORMAN IN SPACE

Roger Corman has kept his promise (*Things to Come*, **Starburst 23**). He's returned to science fiction. And with a bang. The first returns on his New World company's most expensive feature, the \$5½ million *Battle Beyond the Stars*—610 prints are on release in the US—has proved two important things to jolly Roger. One, that sf films don't need budgets as high as the stratosphere they are set in. Two, that the public's appetite for space fantasy is not yet over, despite the over-hyped *Star Trek* and *Black Hole*. Which means that Corman's combine will be making not one, but *three* more sf movies this winter.



The poster art from Roger Corman's *Battle Beyond the Stars*.

Director Jimmy T. Murkami keeps the action and the characters moving superbly in *Battle Beyond the Stars*, which has much more fun—real humour—than most recent space films, as it wittily transfers Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*—or, if you will, John Sturges' *Magnificent Seven*—into space. There's even one of Sturges' *Seven*, Robert Vaughn, in this mercenary group. Another refreshing aspect to the Corman film—there's hardly one copy-*Star Wars* swipe in the entire 104-minute movie. Richard Thomas, far from *The Waltons*, heads the cast as the warrior on a far distant planet with a fight on his hands and no men to battle with. He sets about recruiting—and hires such space buccaneers as George Peppard's cowboy from planet Earth, Robert Vaughn and West German blonde Sybil Danning (planning to go into production for herself since her time with Corman). John Saxon is the No 1 menace—looking as if he's just wandered in from a road-show tour of *The Rocky Horror Show*. He's very funny!

So it's cheap—but never cheap 'n' nasty. The

whole Corman team works exceedingly well within the varied confines and restrictions of money, and overcomes them all. John Zabrocky's sets have a comic book touch to them, Durinda Rice Wood's costumes are great... so, by the way is John (Piranha) Sayles' script from his and Anne Dyer's story.

The effects, mainly Mary Schallack's miniatures, are brashly raw, and somehow more realistic than the norm, thanks to the oddly credited C. Comisky. The special effects were carried out at a new facility built in Venice, just outside LA—and John Carpenter is using the joint next for his *Escape from New York* movie... which has prompted Corman, ever the man with an angle, to re-issue *Death Race 2000*, which is in a similar futuristic vein to Carpenter's new film.

While attending New York's *Creation Science Fiction and Comic Book Convention*, Corman announced his winter's sf programme. The first is, he freely admits, an *Alien* type movie: *Planet of Horrors*. And yes, he's going for a Giger look and feel. Next, Alfred Bester's

script of *Journey Beyond this Galaxy*, about a "mechanistic civilisation," making contact up there somewhere with an alien civilisation, functioning on non-materialistic and mystical principles.

Then comes the big gamble—as Roger's wife, Julie, produces Isaac Asimov's short story, *Nightfall*. Asimov will be a consultant on the film. He and Julie are not the gamble. The subject is. With this film, Roger Corman aims to test the market for what, surely we're all really waiting for; intellectual science fiction. In short, less hardware, if any at all—and more serious, adult philosophy. On a per, perhaps, with the kind of movies Corman likes to buy for his distribution arm—the Bergman and Fellini films and his latest pick-up, the Cannes award winner, *My Uncle from America* directed by Alain Resnais.

With his kind of programming—and market-testing—no wonder a Japanese conglomerate tried to buy up Corman this year. Roger was flattered. But he said *No*, of course. Good. We need him...

ROCKY HORROR SEQUEL SHOW

Yes, it's happening. Or will be as soon as Hollywood recovers from the actor's strike. The *Rocky Horror Sequel Show!* Official title: *Shock Treatment*. Previous title: *The Brad and Janet Show*. Richard O'Brien and Jim Sharman are teamed up again as writer and director, for producer Michael White. Shooting takes place over here but also requires a fortnight's work in Dallas, and that's where the Screen Actors

Guild Show came into it, forcing a suspension of the production until the strike frees the film's American cast to work again. Meantime, of course, the original *Rocky Horror* film is far from dead, picking up around \$100,000 a week in its re-issues and cultish screenings at midnight or thereafter in more than a hundred American cinemas. While not a smash in Britain, the film did great business in Australia and South Africa. Nowhere, though, as good as in America where the audiences these days join in with the dialogue they know the film so well.



Tim Rice as Dr Frank N. Furter from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

EXORCIST III?

Could you stand another *Exorcist*...? Well, ready or not, it will be happening next year, if in an oblique manner. The book's author and producer of the film(s), William Peter Blatty, has lately turned director and is now developing a religious-cum-chiller project to breathe fresh, if not exactly new, life into some of his original characters. But no, Linda Blair of the 360-degree-turning head, is not one of them. Pause for deep sighs of instant relief... The new work is called *Legion* and although it is set in and around the same Jesuit circles of Georgetown as *The Exorcist*, Blatty insists it's no sequel. Well, they all say that don't they? Blatty happens to be right. It's a prequel, if anything, taking place eight years before Ellen Burstyn and chubby Linda moved into town and set the furniture flying out the window, not to mention the occasional priest. *Legion* is beefed up by its central character, Lt Kinderman, the detective played in the first film by the late Lee J. Cobb. "I'd always intended to build future novels around this character," explains Blatty, "and in fact, had considered producing this story before what became *The Exorcist*." He dubs *Legion* a cross between *Don't Look Now* and *Psycho*. "There's no exorcisms, no levitations and no furniture flying around, though to me it's infinitely more terrifying."



Director William Peter Blatty is concerned over Warners' handling of *The Exorcist* finances.

for unstuck American military top brass—he re-cut the film and reverted to its original title, *Twinkle, Twinkle, Killer Kane*. No news, at yet, of it coming to Britain.

ENTER: THE CRAB

It sounds rather like a case of *The Goodies Meet Monty P.*, but to follow up on *Jaws*, *Claws* and the rest, get ready to receive... *Island Claws*. Old tele-star Robert Lansing stars in this \$4-million project, one of the few to be shot entirely in Miami, directed by one Herman Cardenas. It's about a monster crab that chomps up Miami, so it may be the last film to be shot entirely in Miami... Special-effects, including old crabby itself, stem from one of the

King Kong team, Glen Robinson. Oh, did I forget...? The actual crab is about the size of an average house. Difficult to dress that one for the table. Still, I hope it works. Otherwise we'll have to call it... *Flaws*.

RELEASE SWITCH

The powers that be at Warner Brothers are becoming nervous after a fairly disastrous American summer at the box-office for most films. They're busily rewriting releasing schedules for both side of the pond. Suddenly, we have Stanley Kubrick's long-awaited and critically-roasted *The Shining* opening here this month (October) instead of at Christmas... while in the United States, Ken Russell's wildly controversial (what else is new?) scientific fantasy, *Altered States*, has also been pulled from a Yuletide holiday opening and moved on to January—and then in seven cities only, at theatres equipped with 70mm and Dolby Sound. The fuller American release will follow in February.

Warners are full of good reasons for these last-minute switches—mainly to help both films avoid the traditional glut of goodies at Christmastide, it says here. Hahel! On the Russell film, there is much talk of extra special-effects still being shot and decisions still to be made about the amount of nudity Warners will or will not allow into the final cut and such-like. So what it all boils down to is that they're opening *The Shining* as quickly as possible to make up for a thoroughly disappointing start, and to make sure of some quick return on their investment... while they're holding Russell back until the public have forgotten the rumours. And also, the changes mean the films will not be rivals come Oscar time. Russell will have to wait for the 1982 awards.

WARNERS ROW 1

Despite his own huge legal battles with Warner Brothers over the financial fate of *The Exorcist*, William Peter Blatty passed his directorial debut to Warners for release this year in America. It was not a good summer for releases in America this year and he took it back after eight weeks to try *The Ninth Configuration* with a small, independent combine. Before re-opening the film—a lunatic comedy thriller set in an asylum



WARNERS ROW 2

Another star film-maker bemoaning Warner's releasing methods is Malcolm McDowell. Join the queue, kid... He believes his *Time After Time* was never sold correctly to the American public, none of whom, he felt knew H.G. Wells from Orson Welles. McDowell remains bitterly opposed to the hyping of the film as science fiction—wasn't it, then? He was also against the emphasis placed on Jack the Ripper (presumably because he didn't play him) and the chase elements of the film. Why the grumbles? "It's a love story," insists McDowell. Well, it was for him, now that he's marrying his co-star Mary Steenburgen. But it was a pretty touch of sf for the rest of us.

THINGS TO COME



Spectated Bertrand Tavernier directs Harvel Keital on location with *Deathwatch*.

TRIESTE FEST

I'm delighted to see that French director Bertrand Tavernier's *Death Watch* (Starburst 23) carried off the Golden Asteroid for Best Film at the 18th Science Fiction Festival at Trieste. I doubt that Tavernier's work is the shape of things to come in sf cinema—sf of the mind, minus all the laser-shooting hardware. Be good, though, to see a few more films of this nature being produced as well as the juvenile japes in space. Tavernier's award meant the fourth win for France in this top prize spot, but the first for four years. The *Special Jury Prize* went to Russia's *The Hotel*, directed by Gigeri Kromenov—another good, adult-orientated movie about a airline pilot missing in the mountains and finding an hotel where the clientele are not quite as human as they first appear. A further prize from the jury went to Piers Haggard for *The Quatermass Conclusion*. In all, the festival had 14 films unfurled from a dozen countries (Italy, France, Britain, Russia, Germany, Yugoslavia, Hungary, India, Canada, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and America) and the word is the festival will be bigger (though not necessarily better) than ever next year. The Trieste tourist board love it and would like to see it compare more favourably to Cannes in size and sideshow attractions—such as retrospectives of sf films.

TERROR TALES

British independent producer Roy Millichip has been shopping around Hollywood for cash, casting and no doubt an end to the actor's strike in order to kick off his programme of six movies for his new Halcyon Enterprises. He has some good wares to sell, at that. Including one script by Marcello Mastroianni, another (circa 1936) by the great Raymond Chandler, and one by himself—*Open Key*, a religious-cult shocker. Also on the Halcyon bill is *Nightmare Unto Death* by the French occult writer, Frances Molin. This one deals with a bright young girl suddenly flung into a nightmare existence in San Francisco a hundred years ago. A case of *Time Before Time*?

CREEPY TALE

It's just amazing who almost queues up to join the fantasy-chiller brigade these days. Latest stars trying their hands are Richard Chamberlain and John Houseman in Canada's creepy thriller, *Bells*—a \$5-million Toronto affair, directed by our Michael Anderson, now resident in Vancouver. Chamberlain is a college professor tracking down a technical expert who has discovered how to send sound through the telephone in order to kill anyone answering the phone at its first ring. Houseman, the veteran Oscar-winner from *The Paper Chase*, is our

hero's old professor, helping him and the young heroine—Canadian beauty Sara Botsford.

TERRIBLE TALE?



A scene from Juan Piquer's laughable effort, *Supersonic Man*.

Now the bad news. Juan Piquer is making a new movie. Señor Piquer as you may not need

reminding—once seen never forgotten, are his efforts—is the Spaniard who thinks, for some incomprehensible reason, that he knows how to direct films. He'd have difficulty directing traffic as evidenced in ruining Jules Verne in his tawdry version of *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* with Kenneth More. ... not to mention the worst film I've seen in 25 years or so, *Supersonic Man*, with Cameron Mitchell. Somehow, Piquer has won the necessary backing from some equally misguided people to make *Monster Island* in Madrid. His cast actually includes the venerable James Stewart (I know he's been ill, but surely not ga-ga) and Terence Stamp (never much of a dab hand in choosing scripts anyway). A second unit is afloat in Venezuela, Puerto Rico and the Canary Isles and maybe its work will help cover up Piquer's faults. After eight weeks shooting, Piquer and Co are spending all of five weeks on their special effects. *Five weeks!* Yes, well that could just about explain the terrible, laughable and quite juvenile effects in *Supersonic Man*.

LARSON MOVES

Glen Larson, producer of some of Universal-tv's biggest successes—*Buck Rogers*, included—is switching camps. Come the Spring, he's moving across town to 20th Century-Fox Television and will finally pick up some extra cash for his long hours. ... The Larson transfer is part of big moves by Fox TV, which has already picked up the Witt-Thomas Co who make *Soap* and its spinoff, *Benson*, plus the actress Suzanne Pleshette. Larson says the switch will finally give him an ownership position where his product is concerned. "At Universal," he admits, "I'm a salaried employee". At Fox, he'll get a cut of the foreign sales of his shows, for instance, and if his new series ideas take off, he'll collect cuts from their second years on US-tv as well. He might even get into some decent sf. Fox, after all, is space happy. Fox releases the *Star Wars* films. ...

ANIMATED METAL

Yet another magazine hits the screen. After his global triumph with National Lampoon's *Animal House*, Canadian producer Ivan Reitman is lavishing \$7.3-million on an animated *Heavy Metal* cartoon, based on the adult fantasy trips of the monthly mag also published by Lampoon's Leonard Mogul. The founder-publisher of the magazine will be the project's executive producer, Gerry Pottermann directs and the preliminary animation toll has already begun. The film will have seven segments or stories in all, each backed by an original rock score. If you have ears, prepare to shed them now!

KIDBITS

Some Hollywood stars seem to care more for their audiences—particularly the juveniles—

THINGS TO COME

than the profit-hungry producers. Four examples. Ned Beatty, Gene Hackman's tubby sidekick in **Superman**, is out to improve the standard of what's known as "kidvision" in America—children's television programmes. With his wife, Tinker, Ned has inaugurated a non-profit making combine, called Kidbits, to provide an arena in Los Angeles for open communication among producers, creators, researchers and, most important, viewers of kidvision. Plus making tv-shorts—the kidbits in fact. He's already shot a few via his own Beatty Productions—these will or can be slotted into any morning of kiddy vision. Among the stars offering their services to Beatty's plans so far is his Supie mate, Chris Reeve. And across town, Gil Gerard, aka **Buck Rogers**, has just succeeded bionic Lindsay Wagner as the celeb-chairman of the Multiple Sclerosis Read-a-thon—a way of collecting money for sclerosis victims and research from youngsters. They're encouraged to read by Press and tv ads featuring Gerard—and for each book they complete, they collect a donation for their sponsor. A kin of bob-a-book-week... or year.



Ned Beatty, creator of the Kidbits combine.

CAROLINE'S HORROR

Caroline Munro's first American feature, **Maniac**, finally opens in New York in November—with a self-imposed "Adults Only" rating. Both director William Lustig and his star (and executive producer) Joe Spinell prefer to categorise the film themselves rather than win an American X-rating, which usually signifies a

film is pornographic. They would in fact, prefer a new variation of the US X-rating—X-V for violence (which **Maniac** is replete with, and how!) and X-S for well... think about it, Mandy...



Caroline Munro plays a fashion photographer in her new movie, **Maniac**.

VENETIAN CHRONICLES

Charles Fries, the producer who brought you **The Amazing Spider-man** and **The Martian Chronicles**—and turned both sublimines into the ridiculous—is not giving up on the fantasy bit. He's bought Max Ehrlich's book, **Reincarnation in Venice** for his latest tv movie. The subject: A young American who falls for a Venetian beauty... and discovers she was his wife in an earlier life. Oh, come on. Let's be charitable and give Charlie another chance.

HUSH HUSH

Whisper it do, but **The Howling** has completed shooting in California. In total secrecy. The reason was not simply to hide the story from the usual tele rip-off, but to protect the special-effects involved. Something rather extra-special, I hear. Then again, I hear a lot and it doesn't always pan out on the screen. I'm looking forward to this one though. It's made by a bunch of ex-Cormanites: director Joe Dante of **Hollywood Boulevard** fame and **Piranha**; co-producer Michael Finnell from **Rock 'n' Roll High School** (you know... the one with P. J. Curtis in), and writer John Sayles, from **Piranha** and **Battle Beyond the Stars**.

HAPPY LANDINGS

The story behind the making of the surprise film hit of a dismal cinematic summer, **Airplane**, could well be made into another mad comedy by The Kentucky Fried Theatre trio themselves. Since first writing the glorious spoof of all those

aero-disaster movies in 1976, Jim Abrahams and Jerry and David Zucker saw it turned down by every studio in Hollywood. Even after the success of their sketch-film, **Kentucky Fried Movie**, nobody wanted to know about their script—unless it, too, was a fragmented sketch affair. Even when ex-Cormanite Jon Davidson joined the project, all they met were stoney faces and stonier walls. And Davidson tried everyone from the smaller studios to the larger JR type oil men in Dallas. No go!

For a while Warner's seemed interested, and even optioned the re-make right to Paramount's **Zero Hour** movie to help develop the Kentucky Fried script. Aha, you may think, that's how Paramount decided to make the film... But no. What happened was that the Paramount chieftain was dining with a girl who happened to be a part-time reader of scripts at United Artists. Conversationally, he asked her if she'd read any good scripts lately. Everyone asks that conversationally over Hollywood dinners. The answer is usually No. But this girl said yes, she'd read a whacky comedy but UA weren't interested. She related three or four of the crazier sequences and was suddenly dining alone as the Paramount chieftain rushed off to a phone to tell his minions to find that script quickly. And that's how **Airplane** took off.

Paramount being partnered with Universal via CIC around much of the world helped ease the look/soundlike problem of the **Airplane** title with the **Airport** series, and even the Directors' Guild finally gave way and allowed, for the first time, three people to officially share the directing credit... And Paramount got its \$3,500,000 budget back ten times over or more. The **Airplane** film's connection with **Airport** goes further back in fact, as **Airport's** British author Arthur Hailey's previous book, **Flight Into Danger**, was the basis of the uproarious new script. Paramount had filmed the Hailey book as **Zero Hour** in 1957 and later reshot it as a tv flick, **Terror in the Sky**. **Airplane** has made more than both and somewhat made up for Paramount not making **Airport**...

LUCKY FOR SOME

It was, by the way, the same Paramount honcho, Michael Eisner by name, who smartly picked up (for America) the highly successful **Friday the 13th** chiller. He only paid \$1,500,000 for it, about a tenth of the usual Paramount budgets and the film has since cleared around \$50-million. So Michael Eisner's team of office at Paramount would appear to be safe for another year or two! Why did he buy it? "I don't like violence myself, but it has some of the most creative killings I've ever seen on screen." And after all it made up for Eisner's one mistake: **Prophecy**. "I loved the idea of **Prophecy**," he says. "But I didn't like the movie. The execution simply wasn't what was in my mind." Maybe he'll re-make it—Kentucky Fried Monster style.

THINGS TO COME

TREASURE TROVE

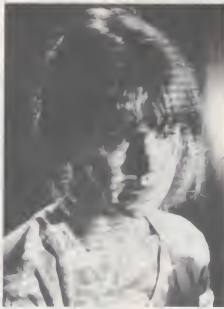
A British company has unearthed a slice of modern Hollywood history for American television—which we could well do with seeing again over here. The company in question is the 18-month-old US arm of Trident Television, which has bought up a variety of old and new tv-movies for syndication to the multifarious local tv stations around America. (That's where the real money is in American tv; not in making the series and films, but syndicating them for years and years afterwards.) The first Trident portfolio includes a tv-movie called **Something Evil**, dating back to 1971. It's a supernatural thriller about a couple moving into a haunted farmhouse with their family. "Flashy... with not enough plot," says Leslie Halliwell's *Teleguide* book. Hah! The stars are Sandy Dennis, Darren (Kolchak) McGavin and Ralph Bellamy, and it's a neat enough mover at 73 minutes with many a lighting effect that clearly underlines the name of the director involved. A certain... Steven Spielberg.

QUICK TAKES

Of all people. Topol, ex-Fiddler on the Roof and Flash Gordon, is Roger Moore's baddy on the hoof in **For Your Eyes Only**...



New Bond villain, Chiam Topol, as he appears in *Flash Gordon*.



Melinda Dillon turns up in the Kenya-based film, *Savage Harvest*.

Alien's Tom Skerrit into *Savage Harvest*, along with the largest cache of trained animals ever shipped abroad for a movie, to Brazil, in fact. Shooting also features Kenya, and **Close Encounters** lady Melinda Dillon...

The other **Close Encounters** lady, Teri Garr (Dreyfuss' wife), heads up the new Coppola production, *The Escape Artist*...

Alien's Harry Dean Stanton, a star at last after 25 years or so ("and he wears it well," says Michelle Phillips), into *Utopia* with Cindy Williams, from tv's *Laverne and Shirley*...

If you thought the effects in *The Final Countdown* were bad (and they were) wait for Lord Low Grade's *Raise the Titanic*. It cost \$35-million and the underwater stuff looks as if it was shot in a bucket...

Christopher Lee, ever on the trot, trots from *The Salamander* with Anthony Quinn, Claudia Cardinale in Rome to David Carradine's *Rally* in Africa...

Paramount, responsible for all the foremost US-tv shows, *Mork and Mindy*, *Happy Days*, *Laverne and Shirley*, *Taxi*, etc., is currently investing no less than \$73-million in new series...

Carrie Fisher takes a temporary rest of the galaxies by joining smooth comic Chevy Chase, *Under the Rainbow*... Although it never sells its movies to tv, the Disney combine is finally making some titles available on video-cassette

Christopher Reeve heads the cast of German wunderkind director Wim Wenders' first Hollywood movie, *Trapdoor*...

Director Curtis Harrington has found one to follow his horrific *Ruby*—it's Iris Murdoch's modern Gothic novel, *The Unicorn*...

Brian De Palma takes a short rest from the

big chair and only produces *The Gold Mine*...

Lindsay Wagner rushes back to the box after her *Hawks* film outing, for the tv-movie, *Callie and Son*, about a woman from the poor side of the tracks chasing money, wealth and power...

Writer-director of Lee Major's *Last Chase*, Martyn Burke has a new novel out in Canada, *Laughing War*, about Vietnam...

William Shatner goes from *The Kidnapping of the President* (which just might prove more successful than *Star Trek—The Motionless Picture*) to another big Toronto thriller number, *The Fright*.



William Shatner is next slated to appear in *The Fright*.

After his British assignments, Steve Spielberg is to re-make (well, sort of) the old 1943 Spencer Tracy movie, *A Guy Named Joe*... Not, please, with John Belushi, Steve...



Stephen Spielberg's next project — a remake of the old Spencer Tracy number, *A Guy Named Joe*.

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THE LAST CHASE

Review by Tony Crawley



Above: A tense moment in *The Last Chase* (1980). Frank Hart (Lee Majors) and Ring McCarthy (Chris Makepeace) are pursued by Capt Williams (Burgess Meredith) along a lonely stretch of highway.

Okay, first things first. While I've never beaten the drum for such a wooden performer as Lee Majors, I like this movie. It has a few delusions of grandeur, but the pace is fine, the effects very special—and the footage shot in the Arizona desert is simply terrific.

It is, I suppose, hardly front-line science-fiction, but co-writer and director Martyn Burke belies his name and gives the high-powered thriller a good feel of suspense, and a measure of substance to his main moral of the importance of the individual in society. Any damned society. Even this one in the utopia, so-called, of tomorrow.

Well, the day after tomorrow then... For the film itself begins the day after today. In the very near future, closer than we think. The day when the petrol has finally run dry and all cars have to be turned in to the nearest police pound.

It is, then, what could be termed the first post-Ayatollah movie.

With the cars off the streets, a deathly silence hangs over the city, even the World Series has been cancelled, though what petrol has to do with baseball, I'm not sure. Well, the crowds couldn't get to the games. I'm told; so what, just show 'em on television.

Our hero—our individual—is Six Million Dollar Man Lee Majors as a fifty cent racing

driver. Over the hill. Burned out. His nerve cracked since causing a fatal crash. You know the story. But he can't bring himself to obey the orders of the day and relinquish his treasured 917-10 Porsche. Instead, he lovingly dismantles it and hides the parts throughout his garage.

As Frank Hart, Lee's a loner. His family has been wiped out in a viral epidemic that is still causing bedlam among the populace. Mob hysteria rules in order to get a job of the life-giving serum. When caught up in one of these riots, Majors offers to help in the grim task of choosing just who among the many will be saved. There is enough of the wonder-drug left for only the young... and the strong. Like I say, you know the story.

Having done his bit for a crazed humanity, our hero takes the subway home—and in a neat touch from Martyn Burke, the train becomes a time capsule. When Majors gets out at the other end, he suddenly has a set of heavy, plastic wrinkles around his eyes... Twenty years have gone by in a trice. We're in the city of the future—as envisaged by scenic artist Nick Kosonic.

Major's job here is spokesman for the Mass Transit Utility. He hates the job, the sterile society, and the hypocritical existence he's stuck with. And he doesn't keep quiet about his feelings, either. He is, then, constantly

monitored by the female chief of the Safety Commission (Diane D'Aquila, a Canadian Shakespearean star in her premiere movie).

Unborn when the film started rolling, Chris Makepeace—15 and into films like *Meatballs* via commercials—is an artful youngster, an electronics genius able to interfere with the Safety Commission's daily broadcasts. Once the cops home in on his signal, the kid has to pack up and flee—his bolt-hole is Major's house. He knows from all the radio reports that Majors is a dissenter, and he seeks his aid in escaping clear across America to the West Coast where an underground movement is setting up a rival society.

Together, man and boy reassemble Frank Hart's Porsche for the trip. They devised a special pump affair in order to reach the scanty gas still left in the underground storage tanks, and make their move to freedom.

The Safety Commission hard-noses see all this, of course. Moves are made to apprehend the escapees, but they should know better than trying to halt a hero like Lee Majors, right? Right!

As his journey begins to make Majors a symbol of individuality (hello, *Rollerball*!) the Safety Commission change their plans. They don't want to stop him anymore. He's to be crushed!

Enter, of all unlikely jet-jockeys, Burgess Meredith, not as Rocky's trainer this time but an ex-USAF pilot and Vietnam war hero. He's summoned to take his Phantom jet out of mothballs and hunt down the runaway Porsche—and destroy it. (where Meredith gets his petrol from is never explained. Or did I doze off at that moment?)

Phantom vs Porsche—no contest, really. Except that just as Majors is born again back at the wheel of his car, Meredith, too, has a new lease of life returning to his station in the sky. He could, naturally, catch up and blast the car to smithereens as quickly as Luke Skywalker with his X-wing fighter. He prefers, instead, to play a cat and mouse game. Meredith is, in short, having a ball up there.

By this time, the film has been rolling merrily along with some neat tension, some fine aerial and ground shots of the protagonists (or their trusty doubles). But so far, not so much of a hint of sex in the air. Nor on *terra-firma* for that matter. Time, then, for the inevitable romantic interlude—yawn! For the kind of sequence we used to mock unmercifully back in the old days of Saturday morning matinees, and which still intrudes like a very sore thumb.

Here, then, is where the producer, as though conscious of the fact that some birds may well be dragged along to see this piece of science-fiction, introduces love. Pure love. With "The Woman Alone", out on the trail. And just to complete the olde worlde touch, she's a Quaker, too.

Eudora is her name, and to be honest, she's a wholly agreeable slice of fantasy woman in



Top: Capt Williams (Burgess Meredith) at the controls of his Phantom jet. Above: Frank Hart (Lee Majors) at the helm of his 1917-18 Porsche. Below: Lee Majors sports a nifty set of plastic wrinkles for his role as Frank Hart, aging racing driver, in *The Last Chase* (1980).



the ever-divine shape and sultriness of French-Canadian star, Alexandra Stewart. This happens to be her second successive film with Lee, too, after their previous Canadian caper, *Agency*. (And yet he says he's still missing Farah? Something's awfully wrong with this guy's bionics.)

The idyllic stop-over at Eudora's cabin is interrupted by the Darth Vaderish police force. And so the chase begins again. As the war of nerves increases, the Porsche and the Phantom hit the desert flats—and at one spectacular moment, they're racing straight towards each other.

A collision is certain. Except, once again, Meredith pulls his jet up at the last minute... barely missing the Majors car.

Our hero gets more of a kick out of this scrape than he does out of the encounter with Eudora. He's proved himself to himself—he's finally conquered his fear of crashes. Well, bully for him—can we get on with the movie now?

Sure enough, the jet is still whipping around the skies, and suddenly begins going through an odd series of manoeuvres. The pilot is, in fact, trying to warn his adversary of trouble ahead at the border. The Safety Commission, dissatisfied with the way Meredith has been running things, has decided to stop Majors in its own way. With a giant laser gun.

Wagging wings has little effect on the pair in the Porsche—they think the filer is still playing with them. So it's up to this other loner to save the day. Burgess Meredith cashes in his chips—turning straight towards the mammoth laser cannon and deliberately crashing headlong into it.

The chase is over. The door has been opened for the Porsche's final escape...

And, wouldn't you know it, that's where Lee Majors decides enough is enough. He stops the car, turns it over to the kid. He can go through the open door to the new world—Majors wants to return to Eudora.

Young Chris Makepeace (I'm surprised Martyn Burke didn't use that as his character's name, instead of the less evocative Ring McCarthy) drives on to be embraced by the waiting freedom fighters, as back there in the distance, beyond the smoking ruins of the jet and the laser gun, our solitary hero rides off back into the desert... and of course, into his new tv version of *High Noon*. He needn't even get off his horse.

Though I'm sure he'll whip off those new-style wrinkles, first. It's one thing taking over a Gary Cooper role, it's quite another looking like him...

The Last Chase (1980)

Lee Majors (as Frank Hart), Burgess Meredith (Capt Williams), Chris Makepeace (Ring McCarthy), Alexandra Stewart (Eudora), Diane D'Aquila (Santana), George Touliatos (Hawkins), Harvey Atkin (Uell), Ben Gordon (Morely), Doug Lennox (Army Captain), George R. Robertson (Announcer), Moses Znaimer (Reporter).

Directed by Martyn Burke. Screenplay by C. R. O'Christopher Martyn Burke and Roy Moore. Photography by Paul Van Der Linden, Edited by Steve Weslak, Art Director Roy Forge Smith, Make-up by Ann Brodie, Hairstylist James Brown, Special effects by Tom Fisher. Video effects by Michael Lennick, Scenic artist Nick Kosonic. Stunt co-ordinator Dwayne McLean, Executive Producer Gene Slott, Co-producer Fran Roasti, Produced by Martyn Burke. A Caraco production.

MAMA DRACULA

Review by Bobby Dupea

Louise Fletcher, such a blood-sucker as that harriden of a Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, goes the full route in her latest film of what appears to be a world tour. Since the Cuckoo Oscar, followed almost immediately by the forgettable *Exorcist II—The Heretic*, she has steered clear of Hollywood and made movies in Germany, Canada . . . and now here she is in Belgium, of all countries, playing the Renaissance countess who has remained forty for the last four centuries.

We know her best as Countess Dracula. Louise's version, though, is called *Mama Dracula*. And where Ingrid Pitt merely dropped her clothes (as often as possible) in the Hammer film, Louise Fletcher drops laughs. For this is the female lib (I suppose) version of *Love at First Bite*. And anything George Hamilton can do, Louise Fletcher can do just as well—in places, even better.

She's supported by a Mel Brooks style ensemble casting, including a mute maid, who's played by a man . . . a mad professor trying to find a way of making fake blood (virgins just aren't so plentiful anymore, and their blood is required for Mama's rejuvenating baths) . . . Mama's twin sons, Vladimer and Ladislav . . . and a couple of interfering cops, including *Last Tango's* Maria Schneider out foxing Angie Dickinson as a policewoman named Nancy Hawaii!

Slyly funny, more than wickedly outrageous, rather more controlled than if Brooks or Wilder had got hold of the script—*Mama Dracula* stems from the fertile comedy brain of Brussels-born Boris Szulzinger, the co-director of the Franco-Belgian *Tarzoan*, *Shame of the Jungle* send-up which has finally reached Britain, after a five-year legal battle, as *Jungleburger*. (Oh, that Boris Szulzinger!)

As with the cartoon ape-man caper, Boris had got one of his *National Lampoon* chums,





Opposite above: Professor Peter Van Bloed (Jimmy Schuman) takes a nasty turn at the sight of his antra. Opposite left: Louise Fletcher and director Boris Szulzinger discuss a scene on the set of *Mama Dracula* (1980). Opposite right: The Comissaire (Jess Hahn) exchanges a few words with Lad (for is it Vlad?). Above: Mummy's Boys! Louise Fletcher as *Mama Dracula* with the Wajnberg twins (Marc-Henri and Alexandre) as Vlad and Lad.

Tony Hendra, to script the English language version. This could mean that Belushi, Ackroyd and company will eventually be supplying the English—well, American—soundtrack. (Dubbing what we know as *Jungleburger*, was one of John Belushi's first film jobs, long before the National Lampoon movie, much less *1941* and *The Blues Brothers*.)

Well, there's heaps of good stuff for the Lampoon team to have fun with.

Notably, Mama D's method of hunting out the few remaining virgins left in town, in order to fill her bath. She opens a boutique—her spider's web for the mind of fresh young flies she needs to keep her beauty lasting for another few centuries.

Then, there's her twin lads, Vlad and Lad. Vlad wants to live up to his name and become, if not a downright impaler, then certainly a worthy member of the *Dracula* family. Except, poor chap, he can't quite get to grips with the necessary techniques required for the big bite. Shy, you see.

Lad, on the other fang, is quite content with his lot in life. He's busily designing all the outfits on sale in Mama's dress shop, just downtown a trot or two from her castle.

These lads are played by the 27-year-old Belgian twin humorists, Marc-Henri and Alexandre Wajnberg. Marc-Henri has a hand in the original script, as well, with Boris Szulzinger and Pierre Sterckx.

Comedy aside, this is really a lushly draped

movie. It's shot in sumptuous art nouveau settings, courtesy of several Belgian museums. Furthermore, the man behind the camera is the Belgian ace Willy Kurant. He's worked with just about every top director, from Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Volker Schlöndorff to Roger Corman in Hollywood and two films for Orson Welles.

Maria Schneider enters the plot disguised as one of the actors entertaining guests as Mama's big birthday part. (It's always the same birthday every year, of course—she's 40 again, *quelle bore!*) Maria is busy seducing as many men as the countess. A wise move on her part. Being occupied on the night of festivities means she escapes the bloody orgy that follows...

At one time, she decides to pop into some of the countess' clothes. Once Vlad (or maybe it's Lad?) sees her this way, he's really perplexed. He thinks Maria is his Mama... and can't stop trying to practise his neck biting routine. As Mama says, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again...

Good to see Maria Schneider back on-screen again. She has, apparently, finally been completing a few projects lately, and about time too. This is her seventh film in three years, since her bitter days of forever stalking off the sets of others, *Caligula* included.

And it's her wedding to Vlad (or maybe it's Lad) that closes Szulzinger's ensuing madness. That after several local virgins have been found looking a mite paler than usual.

After half the town has been up in arms, complaining about her up in her big castle doing away with the local talent.

As Maria Schneider says "I do", and her white dress turns appropriately to red, the swimming pool is taken over by a bunch of vampiric swimmers, forming the shape of a heart pierced by an arrow...!

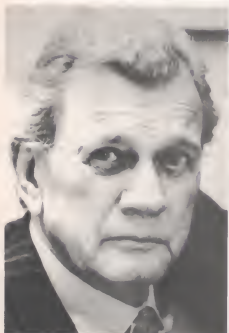
Forget Mel Brooks. Forget Gene Wilder. Forget even Monty P or *National Lampoon*. This, finally, is *Dracula*, Busby Berkeley style! And exceedingly jolly stuff it is too. Can't wait to hear the Tony Hendra adaptation, though!

Mama Dracula (1980)

Louise Fletcher (as *Mama Dracula*), Marc-Henri Wajnberg (Vladimir), Alexandre Wajnberg (Ladislav), Maria Schneider (Nancy Hawaii), Jimmy Shuman (Prof Peter Van Bloed), Michel Israel Rosa, the maid, Jess Hahn (Comissaire). Directed by Boris Szulzinger. Screenplay by Boris Szulzinger, Pierre Sterckx and Marc-Henri Wajnberg, adapted by Michel Gast, English language script by Tony Hendra, Photography by Willy Kurant, Sound by Georg Krauthelm, Edited by Claude Cohen, Art Direction by Philippe Graff, Make-up by Pascale Kellen, Hair styles by Nora Puttemans, Costume design by Mouchy Houbins, Assistant directors Francis de Laveleye and Pierre de Heusch, Produced by Boris Szulzinger. A Valis Films production, for French release by UGC Belgian release by Elan Film. No UK/US distributor. Still photos by Vic Meulemans.

THE HEARSE

Review by Tony Crawley



Top: Trish Van Devere plays teacher Jane Hardy in *The Hearse* (1980). Above: Joseph Cotton plays family lawyer Walter Pritchard. Right: The chilling poster artwork for the film. Opposite: Jane Hardy (Trish Van Devere) meets the horribly scared chauffeur of *The Hearse* (1980). Opposite inset: Jane Hardy (Trish Van Devere) relaxes in her coffin in this publicity still from *The Hearse*.

As if to make up for her own shortcomings in *The Changeling*—but then if his wife can't, who can hope to steal a movie away from the mighty George C. Scott?—Trish Van Devere offers something of a sequel in this lively enough spine-jangler from the more *el cheapo* environs of Hollywood.

She's back in the same dark old house syndrome, a place she's lately inherited from an aunt in a backwater rural outpost called Blackford. Black indeed are the events inside the house. The light plays tricks on her. Windows shatter. The shower turns itself on. There are footsteps in the hall. And her aunty's ghost doesn't exactly help settle her nerves.

But all this is child's play—hackneyed, traditional stuff at that—compared with what's afoot outside the building. Out there on the main road. The trouble here—and it keeps recurring like Jack Palance in rotten movies—is *The Hearse*—a mysteriously malevolent 1953 Packard with a Hollywood paint job and something of a yen for Trish. Maybe it knows she is a *Van Devere*!

It has a life of its own, this vehicle, an idea that is hardly new to fans of Spielberg's *Duel* or Elliot Silverstein's *The Car*. Even so, there's something more dreadfully ominous about a hearse... related to all our fears of death and the unknown beyond it, I suppose.

This particular cemetery bus is possessed and wants, it soon seems patently obvious, to possess Trish as well. It's not her year, is it?

She is your typical, everyday, horror-film schoolmarm on holiday, trying to recover from both a divorce and her mother's death. Not to mention her poor aunty's recent demise. (Up in flames she went, on Blackford Bridge.) And, of course, Trish finds herself in the midst of a cold and unfriendly community. Salem's Lot West, as it were.

The only people affecting any interest in her are the vicar (*Donald Hotton*) who is after her soul, the kid from the hardware store (*Perry Lang*) who is after her body, and the curmudgeonly old lawyer (*Joseph Cotton*); well, John Carradine is always so busy elsewhere) who is after her property. He felt aunty's joint was due to him on her death. Which could, of course, explain a lot about the old lady's fiery demise.

It's after her first visit to Cotton that Trish cottons on to something amiss in Blackford. She's followed along the road by the shining black hearse, which takes an instant dislike to her, or women drivers in general, barrels down upon her and turfs her car into a hellish spin—and then promptly disappears from view.

And so, enter our hero... Perhaps. You never quite know where you are with the population of this film. William Bleich's script



has more red herrings than Billingsgate market. Anyway, our heroic type's name is Tom Sullivan, and he's terribly handsome in a women's magazine dream-wish fashion; an answer to any divorcee's prayer, particularly when she's been toppled into a ditch by a continually disappearing hearse.

That night, Trish plops into bed with aunty's diary. And lo! such tempestuous reading, to be sure. All about this passionate love affair with a mysterious man whose powers swept over her... The diary is just getting interesting when there's an awful din outside the house. It's that hearse gunning its engine, splashing headlights everywhere and apparently waiting to take Trish on a journey someplace. The final journey?

All seems better in the light of day, and apart from a visit to aunty's grave—and the shocking sight of a scarred man in chauffeur's uniform, Trish recovers well enough to have a date with Tom. But once back home and alone—hell's bells, there's that hearse again. Lights ablaze and full of wind, like a Village People disco movie—a wind that transports, sucks poor Trish into its back seat... and off. The journey is on at last. The venue? Would you believe a Black Mass?

Come to that, guess who's driving? Right, the scared chauffeur. Not that the scared Trish is too clear about what does or does not happen. By the time she awakes in an understandable cold sweat, she's faced with her usual predicament the morning after the night before in Blackford. Fantasy or reality? Hallucination or nightmare?

So it goes... Things go awry all over the house and outside. Before long, Trish is off her rocker, running and screaming like a headless chicken. But Tom is right there by her side. He's so comforting, so seductive—well what, dear diary, is a poor bewitched schoolmarm to do? And so she does and suddenly life is

wonderful, love is better and she's deciding to settle in Blackford.

This news pleases Joseph Cotton, who's naturally at the bottom of the scare tactics at the house. But not, it seems, anything to do with the hearse, because he's later found all mangled, dead and suspended in the shower.

There is a greater shock in store for our put-upon heroine. Calling at Tom's house, she finds it's nothing but a rotting frame, and there, inside on a table, is a photograph of a happy young couple. Trish's aunt and Tom! Outside is his gravestone, marked 1911-1949.

Well, that does it. I mean, she's going to pack now and get the hell out of town, fast. Tom has other plans. He's offering her eternal life. Aha! Her front door crashes down with a burst of yet more wind, there's the vicar outside... Trish is in a trance. But she breaks free. Rushes to her car. Tom jumps into the hearse. The chase is on right towards Blackford Bridge, the scene of aunty's fiery death. The battle is waged yet again then. In the right corner, Good. In the left, Evil. And may the best (wo)man win...

The film is, basically, no more than the usual cheap-budget horror-fantasy affair, except to say, of course, that such movies have been improving this year. The biggest star-name they pull in, the better the frolic, and Trish Van Devere is no exception to this rule. She works well as the schoolmarm, engenders sympathy for her, which is essential in order to make us suspend disbelief in the hoary old happenings.

Like Irwin Yablans and *Halloween*, *The Hearse* germinated in the imagination of its producer, Mark Tenser; it's well enough scripted, shot, directed and more stunted than special-effected by Alan Gibbs' team. I liked it better than *Friday the 13th*, for example, which perhaps isn't saying much, as I've liked almost anything I've seen this

year better than *Friday the 13th*, with the obvious exception of the year's most literal horror film, *Can't Stop the Music*.

And finally, before being accused of forgetting his credit, let me name the actor behind good old (see, I told you he was old) handsome Tom. He's the French actor David Gautreaux who was within a Leonard Nimoy ear-piece of playing Spock in *Star Trek—The Motionless Picture*.

When Nimoy was doing his number about money and stuff, Gene Roddenberry and Robert Wise hunted around for a possible replacement and chanced upon young Gautreaux from his tv work like *Man From Atlantis*. At the eleventh hour, however, Nimoy made his peace with Paramount, and David Gautreaux had to turn in his ears. He was given, instead the small—much smaller—role of Commander Branch. He branches out much better as the demon lover in *The Hearse*.

The Hearse (1980)

Trish Van Devere (as Jane Hardy), Joseph Cotton (Walter Pritchard), David Gautreaux (Tom Sullivan), Donald Hutton (Rev Winston), Ned Flory (Sheriff Denton), Donald Petrie (Luke), Christopher McDonald (Pete), Perry Lang (Paul), Fredric Franklin (Mr Gordon), Olive Dunbar (Mrs Gordon), Al Hansen (Bo Reinquist), Dominic Barto (The Driver), Nicholas Shields (Dr Greenwalt), Chuck Mitchell (Counterman), Jimmy Gatherum (Boy), Victoria Eubank (Lois), Tanya Bowers (Schoolgirl). Directed by George Bowers, Script by William Bleich, Photography by Mori Kawa, Edited by George Berndt, Music by Webster Lewis, Art Director Keith Michl, Sound Mixer Jan Brodin, Assistant Directors John Curran and Pete Robinson, Stunt Co-ordinator Alan Gibbs. Produced by Mark Tenser, A Marimark Production for Crown International Pictures. Still photos by Randy Tepper.



THE NEW DR WHO

JOHN FLEMING TALKS TO THE NEW PRODUCER OF THE LONG-RUNNING TV SERIES, *DR WHO*.

The new season of *Dr Who* has a new producer. How will that affect the programme? Will there be lots of changes? John Fleming went to BBC TV to talk to producer John Nathan-Turner about his plans and his views on television's longest-running fantasy show.

Nathan-Turner is 33 and was born in Birmingham. On leaving school, he turned down a university place and, instead, decided on a theatrical career. After some experience in acting and stage-management, he joined the BBC in 1968. He worked mostly on drama shows and eventually became Production Unit Manager on *All Creatures Great and Small*, *Angels*, *Flesh and Blood*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and last two seasons of *Dr Who*. He describes the job of Production Unit Manager as "general and financial adviser to the producer". Fleming and Nathan-Turner talked when the BBC financial crisis was as great as ever and when the Musicians' Union strike was at its height.

Starburst: You were a Production Unit Manager. That sounds un-creative.

John Nathan-Turner: Well, I became production manager in order to ultimately become a producer – as a stepping stone. I enjoyed doing it, but it was just another rung. And certainly that sort of financial background – mentally – is tremendously useful for actually doing the job.

Your executive producer is Barry Letts, a former *Dr Who* producer. Doesn't that cause friction?

No, it's absolutely no problem at all. Barry is also producing the family classic programmes (on Sunday afternoons) which take up a lot of his time. But he's someone I go to for advice and consultation when I need to.

This is your first programme as producer. Doing *Dr Who* is really being chucked in at the deep end – Never enough time or money.



Above: John Nathan-Turner (picture by Graham Rickard from the book *A Day with a TV Producer*). Below: The Leisure Hive from the *Dr Who* story of the same name. Right: Matthew Waterhouse as Adric and Lalla Ward as Romana. Far right: Adric (Matthew Waterhouse) and Ivo (Clinton Greyn) in the *Dr Who* story *State of Decay*.

Er. It's a fantastic challenge. What has really pleased me about it – apart from actually getting the job – is that I've never been very fond of the six-part stories and I wanted to drop them from this season. I asked, through Barry and my head of department, if we could do 7 four-part stories – making 28 in all – which is 2 more than of late. Inevitably, one ran the risk of being told *No, do 24 – 2 shorter than of late*. But unfortunately it got through. Why don't you like six-parters?

Well, I found that many of the six-parters in recent years have really been 2 four-part

stories condensed – unmasking one villain at the end of episode four and then having another villain. I just think four is the ideal length for the programme in its current form. What other changes are you making?

Well, we've got a new opening and closing title-sequence which goes a long way from the traditional time-tunnel. We have a new radiophonic version of the theme music, which is being released on a record and which I have tremendously high hopes about. We have a new logo. The Doctor has a new costume.

A new costume?

Well, he still has the same silhouette – the scarf and hat are retained, but it's just different colours. More of a uniform look as opposed to the casual look the Doctor's had of late.

Why's that change been made?

My decision.

You felt that he

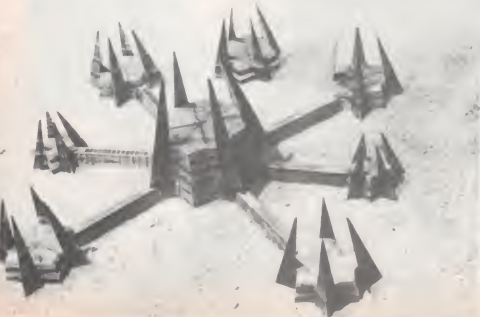
I just thought he needed generally smartening up.

And I hear you've reduced the comedy element.

Yes, I think we're trying to approach it much more seriously as an adventure-science-fiction in which there is humour rather than something which is dominantly humorous.

But isn't humour the basis of the Tom Baker characterisation?

I think humour has its place in the programme – of course it does – and it's a very essential ingredient. It's a case of putting the spotlight on the humour at the relevant





moment in the story in each episode. So I wouldn't say we're wiping it out. I think we're playing it down.

Drama with comedy, rather than comedy with drama?

Yes.

Tom Baker had a lot of control over the character.

Tom Baker is playing the Doctor, yes. He's the fourth Doctor. I think when he first started – I was looking at some old cassettes recently – there was not a dominant humour in the character. I think each new producer imposes some sort of style on the programmes and I would just like the comedy to

think there have always been lots of writers who've never written for the show before who've wanted desperately to do it. I mean, if you don't entertain new writers, you'd be stuck with the same people who wrote it in 1963. We are concentrating on new writers who come with fresh ideas and a fresh outlook towards the programme.

I'm surprised you don't have a full-time historian for the series, like Coronation Street does.

Well, I'm keen on continuity. I've spent a lot of time looking back at the old cassettes and scripts of stuff that's unfortunately been junked. I think it's tremendously important. I think obviously the time will come – it hasn't so far – when we will want to change something for the particular structure of the new script. But I see no point in changing it for change's sake. You might as well get the history right, if possible, and then change it if you absolutely have to because it doesn't quite work within the framework of your particular four-parter.

You were going to scrap K-9.

No, this is something that's been blown up by the press. I have been accurately quoted as saying there are some stories in which he will not appear this season, but there are no plans for him to leave the programme during this season at all.

Surely the problem is that K-9 is omnipotent and, any corner the Doctor gets into, this silly dog will always rescue him.

I think it's something that some writers have relied on to get the Doctor and/or his com-

panions out of a situation they can't get out of. But that's something we're watching.

The newspaper coverage didn't affect the K-9 decision at all?

No. But even in that article in *The Sun*, I was quoted as saying there are no plans to get rid of K-9. I think it was some sort of inside story from the BBC and somebody had got their lines crossed.

You're bringing in a new male companion. Does that mean Lalla Ward is leaving?

Lalla is leaving the programme.

Is she being replaced by another female companion?

I want to see Lalla – or, at least, the character

"Yes, I am trying to bring the age of the [Doctor's] companions down."

"I was very fond of the situation some years back where there was a boy and a girl as companions."

fall more into the background.

There have been periods of monsters, gore, strong stories. What's your bias?

I think a mixture of them all. Very strong stories indeed. Very varied.

You've brought in a lot of new blood for the writing.

Yes, apart from two very well-known *Dr Who* writers (David Fisher and Terrance Dicks) this season is totally new writers – I'm very keen to do that and so is my new script editor Christopher Bidmead.

Isn't it a big risk to rely on writers who haven't got the feel of the series?

The programme's fantastically popular and I

cf Romana – gets on with the new boy, because they do at least three stories together before Lalla goes. I was very fond of the situation some years back where there was a boy and a girl as companions. I thought it worked tremendously well.

Why did it work?

I think from an audience-identification point of view it's good that there is one of each sex. Also, if you split up the Doctor and a companion, they've got no-one to talk to. If you've got K-9, the Doctor, a boy and a girl, you can split them into two groups and still have dialogue within each group.

Lalla gets killed off, does she?



Above: Matthew Waterhouse plays Adric, the latest addition to the regular cast of Dr Who. Below left: The Doctor (Tom Baker) is the victim of a temporal experiment gone awry in the story The Leisure Hive. Below right: Meglos, last of the Zolpha Thurans, attempts to adopt the Doctor's form, but is unable to maintain the disguise in The Last Zolpha Thurans.



Lalla leaves. She's not being killed off
So you're leaving it open that you could
replace her with another Romana?
Er... I'm leaving that open.
This new male assistant, Matthew Waterhouse.

He's 18-years-old. He hasn't done a lot of acting before - He's only done two episodes of a new BBC serial *To Serve Them All My Days*. I think he's quite a find - he's going to be great.

What sort of character is he in the story?

He's a rather rough diamond who is a member of a sort of street gang who go round stealing food to eat and pickpocketing. He's

**"Apart from two very-well-known
Dr Who writers (David Fisher
& Terrance Dicks) this season is
totally new writers."**

been described as a cosmic Artful Dodger which, in a way, is not a bad description.

Is that where the idea came from?

(Laughs) Not at all.

What was the original idea?

We wanted somebody young, who was adventurous, intelligent and not totally good - or, at least, appeared not to be totally good - appeared to have a few bad streaks as well as very good ones.

Sounds a bit like Avon in *Blakes's 7*.

Not at all like that.

An anti-hero?

No, I wouldn't call him an anti-hero at all.

He's very young. Are you consciously trying



Above left: *The Doctor* (Tom Baker) and *Romana* (Lalla Ward) arrive in Brighton in the early part of the last century at the beginning of the adventure *The Leisure Hive*. Above right: David Haig plays Pangol, one of the directors of *The Leisure Hive*. Below: In the adventure, *State of Decay*, *The Doctor* (Tom Baker) and *Romana* (Lalla Ward) are startled by the appearance of a group of hooded figures.

to get a younger group in?

Yes. Actually Matthew, who's 18, looks 15 – so yes, I am trying to bring the ages of the companions down.

One of your new writers, Andrew Smith, is only 19. How did you find him?

He sent in unsolicited scripts. In fact, he'd been sending in stuff for about five years. There was a massive file in my script editor's office, including old scripts that he'd sent in, scene-breakdowns, story ideas. And there were a lot of encouraging replies from previous producers and previous script editors. He then sent in something else that we thought was worth encouraging and I must say I'd delighted with the four scripts he's produced. I think he's quite a find. He's doing a story called *Full Circle*, the third one to go out.

Earlier on, you mentioned new radiophonic music. I gather Dudley Simpson won't be composing incidental music as he normally does.

No, he won't. The incidental music is also being done by the Radiophonic Workshop.

Will you still have Musicians' Union problems?

Touch wood – currently – we don't. The decision was made back in January and it couldn't have been more fortuitous, really.

If you were affected by the M. U. strike, do you think the show would work as well without music?

I'd be very unhappy to put the programme out without incidental music

Why?

I think it's an absolutely essential ingredient of the programme.

But shouldn't the plot carry the story along without the music having to reinforce it?

I don't think it's a case of 'carrying' the plot along. I think it's a case of augmenting. It adds

a certain polish and over-all style to the production if there is specially-composed incidental music that is pointing the drama. We are using a lot more music this season than there has been in the past.

You've talked about the changes you want to make. It's now becoming successful in the U.S. Do you think there will be any pressure to change the programme for the American market – as there was with Space 1999?

No, none at all. The BBC doesn't operate under those sort of conditions at all.

So, all-in-all, what's it been like as a producer?

It's been tremendous so far. I can't believe the time is slipping away so quickly. I was originally asked to look after the programme for 15 months – one season – and I've done almost 9 months now. I mean, you can see from the chart on the wall, our short schedule's so gruelling that the months do tend to go by very quickly.

And where do you go after Dr Who?

I'd very much like to stay with Dr Who for at least another year.

One last question I have to ask. Are the Daleks coming back?

No in this season.



"Is John Brosnan tired of living?"
 "...Iynch John Brosnan." "I would
 advise (John Brosnan) to have his brain
 checked." "...I suggest Saturn as a suitable
 place of exile. ... And so on. To judge from
 these reactions, which appeared in the
 letters page of *Starburst* 25, no one could be
 blamed for assuming that my review of *The
 Empire Strikes Back* in number 23 was a
 hatchet, or laser, job, yet a look at my piece
 on the film will reveal that I actually liked it!
 As proof I quote the following extracts:
 "entertaining... often exciting... visually
 dazzling... beautiful model animation...
 excellent special effects... plenty of pace...
 refreshing streak of humour... etc."

Now does that sound like a man who
 should be hung, drawn and quartered, and
 then banished to Saturn (presumably without
 even the company of Farrah Fawcett)? No, of
 course not.

The tone of my review was a "more-in-
 sorrow-than-in-anger" one and my criticisms
 sprung from the fact that my high expecta-
 tions for the movie had been let down.
Empire admittedly has a lot going for it but it
 is a disappointment after *Star Wars* despite
 the skill, care, money and imagination that's
 been lavished on its making. And I stand by
 the reasons I gave in my review—the story-
 line is weak to the point of non-existence and
 the picture is badly constructed, what with its
 climax at the beginning instead of the end
 (looking at *Empire* again I realised it was like
 seeing the last half of one movie followed by
 the first half of another one).

The fact that *Empire* doesn't have a strong
 storyline leads me to the problem of the
 Force. My comment that too much emphasis
 was placed on it this time seemed to raise the
 ire of readers more than anything else I said in
 my review. The common view was, as one
 reader put it, that "...the Force is a basis for
 the whole *Star Wars* series and without its
 existence much of the film would be
 meaningless..." Yes, I quite agree, but I
 wasn't talking about the importance of the
 Force *within* the context of the movie. You
 see, the Force is what is known in the trade as
 a "McGuffin". This is a term invented by
 Hitchcock to describe the element in the
 movie that motivates the characters and
 provides the stimulus for the action. It can be
 anything from a secret formula to stolen
 jewels but in the case of the *Star Wars* saga it
 happens to be the Force. ...

Now while a McGuffin has to be of vital
 importance to the characters *within* the story
 it has no intrinsic value of its own. In other
 words, the only importance it has is what the
 characters invest it with—outside of that it is
 of no interest whatsoever. For example, if the
 McGuffin is a secret formula it's not going to
 be of any advantage to the audience if the
 characters in the movie spend a lot of time
 actually describing the formula—all the
 audience needs to know is that there is such a
 formula and that it's important to the
 characters.

In *Star Wars* the Force was an effective
 McGuffin, it provided motivation and so on
 but was rightly kept vague, ill-defined and in
 the background where it belonged. However
 in *Empire* it is mistakenly brought onto stage
 centre, presumably because Lucas and the
 other writers were well aware that the story
 lacked substance and felt obliged to fill it with
 something. As a result the Force—a flimsy
 collection of pseudo-mystical ideas that

THE CRITIC S

A NEW COLUMN BY JOHN BROSCHAN



Lucas probably flung together in the bath one
 morning—is suddenly being exposed to
 close scrutiny, a scrutiny it isn't capable of
 withstanding because there isn't really any-
 thing there to scrutinise.

Take a hard look at the Force and what do
 you see? A watered-down mixture of
 religion—but one that carefully avoids any
 mention of a deity for fear of offending
 anyone—a few philosophical banalities, tele-
 kinesis and a touch of Zen. But by having the
 characters in the film trying to elaborate on the
 nature of the Force, etc, all Lucas has done is
 add an element of portentousness, not to
 mention pretentiousness, that wasn't present
 in *Star Wars*.

What is happening is that Lucas is relying
 more and more on the Force to get him out of
 difficulties with the storyline, as well as to add
 unnecessary substance to what is basically a
 cinematic comic strip (and as such is a work of
 art). The Force has become a substitute for
 originality, fresh ideas and genuine story-
 telling skill. It's become a magical grab-bag
 into which Lucas and his writers can reach
 everytime they get into trouble. Witness the
 climax of *Empire*—there is Luke hanging by
 the skin of one hand underneath the floating
 city and only inches away from death. How
 does Lucas get him out of this? Simply by
 having the Force provide him with a new
 power—telepathy—and hey presto, he's
 saved. It's really just the equivalent of James
 Bond's gadgets—a new one is going to pop up
 ready-made to fit the situation whenever it's
 needed.



STRIKES BACK



Nope, I'm sorry folks, but the Force is just a great, big cop-out. But that's enough of that—no use in flogging a dead Force. . .

And now onto the other subject that also upset certain readers a great deal, particularly the female ones—the romance between Han and Leia. Not only did some people disagree, to put it mildly, with my assessment of this relationship but they apparently consider it to be the greatest love affair since Romeo and Juliet, or even Starsky and Hutch. Yet it's obvious that Han and Leia's romance exists merely to provide comic relief! I suspect that Lucas was getting his revenge on all that "mushy stuff" that used to interrupt the action in the movies he used to enjoy as a kid (at one point Han actually uses that term when he says to Leia: "Now don't start going all mushy on me. . ." which is a curiously juvenile thing for an adult to say).

You'll notice that whenever a love scene between them is beginning to get underway it is immediately interrupted by *something*, to inevitable comic effect. It's also a very one-sided affair which adds to the humour. Leia is in love with Han Solo and so is Han Solo (in love with Han Solo) which is why, when Leia tells him she loves him and he simply replies, "I know", it's a very funny moment. And having seen the movie again I will give the scriptwriters the benefit of the doubt and say that it probably was meant to be funny even though, according to one reader, no one finds it amusing in Leeds.

But really, folks, I *did* like the movie so call off the lynch mob, okay? The fact that I didn't find it to be the perfect masterpiece that some fans consider it to be is no reason to get out the tar and feathers. As the late Kenneth Tynan once wrote: "(A critic) can only be personal. . . He is neither a ticket salesman or a weather vane. . . His job is to record a unique experience as it impinged on his mind and sensibility, and the whole machinery of bias and preference contained therein. . . There is no such thing as an impersonal critic because there is no such thing as an impersonal person. There are temperaments, and impacts; and good criticism is the aftermath of a fruitful collision."

Well, I hope there are going to be many "fruitful collisions" in this column in the months ahead but I would advise passengers who get nervous and upset when their personal sacred cows get bruised to keep their seat belts fastened up tight. As Bette Davis once said, "It's going to be a bumpy ride." (Or words to that effect.)

Speaking of collisions leads me to a movie called *Chain Reaction*. Written and directed by Ian Barry it is full of collisions but none of them are fruitful. It's an Australian version of *The China Syndrome* but whereas that movie used the thriller format to examine a serious subject, *Chain Reaction* uses the same serious subject, the dangers presented by the nuclear energy industry, as a launching pad for a bad melodrama. And whenever the plot starts to flag, which is often, Barry inserts a gratuitous car chase. The car chases are admittedly very spectacular (they were handled by the man who made *Mad Max*) but they aren't enough to save this mess of a film. The sort of thing to go and see when your brain is running on only one cylinder. ●

Top left & far left: Two scenes from the Australian nuclear meltdown thriller, *Chain Reaction*. Left: Empire's prime mover of *The Force*, Yoda.



Stephen King has been described as one of the greatest American writers of 20th Century horror fiction, rivaling Poe and Lovecraft.

From *Carrie*, published in 1974, his novels of the occult and fantastic have sold in the millions. It was only natural that film makers should snap up the rights for a best-selling author's work.

Brian De Palma turned *Carrie* into a smash hit horror thriller, still remembered for its slam-bang shock finale.

Salem's Lot, King's reworking of vampire mythology, was produced in 1979 as a four-hour, two-part NBC-TV special, directed by Tobe Hooper of *Texas Chain-saw Massacre* fame.

George Romero has the film rights to King's massive end-of-the-world adventure, *The Stand*, and plans to make the film in "a year or two". Romero has also commissioned King to write *Night-Creeps*, an anthology screenplay of new material.

Producer Milton Subotsky has options on six of King's *Night Shift* anthology stories and already has scripters hard at work adapting the frightening sextet for two films.

Perhaps the most eagerly anticipated filming of a King novel is Stanley Kubrick's version of *The Shining*.

Stanley Kubrick began his film career in 1953 with the privately financed *Fear & Desire*. He followed this with two thrillers, *Killer's Kiss* (1955) and *The Killing* (1956), films which displayed Kubrick's technical virtuosity. With *Paths of Glory* (1958), a savage anti-war film with Kirk Douglas, Kubrick became a

film-maker to be reckoned with.

Impressed by Kubrick, Kirk Douglas hired the director for his epic 1960 production, *Spartacus*. The result, though reputedly not to Kubrick's liking, remains the most literate of the spate of sword and sandal epics of the sixties.

For his next film, in 1962, Kubrick turned to Vladimir Nabokov's modern classic, *Lolita*, starring Peter Sellers in an untypical role. The film was a *cause celebre* of its day, outraging moralists and causing censorship problems in several countries.

With *Dr Strangelove* in 1963, Kubrick tapped into the Cold War paranoia of the day with a scathingly witty and savagely satirical black comedy.

However, it was with his next feature in 1969 that Kubrick's name became best known to film-goers around the world.

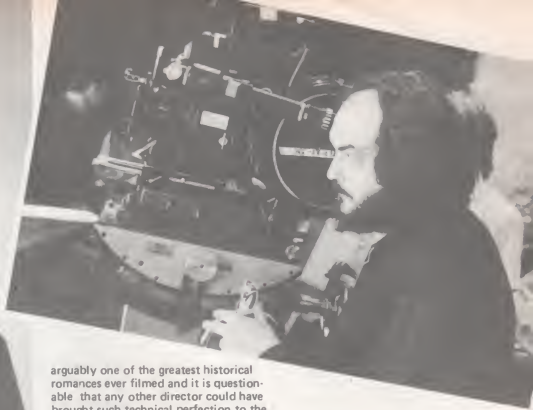
2001: A Space Odyssey completely redefined the science fiction film and gave the genre a respectability it had always lacked. It was with 2001 that Kubrick's quest for perfection reached its zenith and the film paved the way for all the space sagas which followed. It also provided a yardstick from which sf films are still being measured.

Kubrick remained in the futuristic genre for his next film, *A Clockwork Orange*, in 1971. Based on Anthony Burgess' novel, *A Clockwork Orange* painted a very different picture of a future world to that of 2001. The film displayed Kubrick's usual meticulous eye for technical projection in its vision of a bleak society. The film was viciously attacked by critics all over the world for its apparently gratuitous violence, but the public loved it and it proved one of Kubrick's greatest financial successes.

This was not to be the case of Kubrick's next film, *Barry Lyndon*, based on Thackeray's classic. *Barry Lyndon* is

THE SHINING





A SPECIAL SNEAK PREVIEW
OF THE NEW STANLEY KUBRICK
MOVIE TO BE RELEASED LATER
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SHINING



arguably one of the greatest historical romances ever filmed and it is questionable that any other director could have brought such technical perfection to the subject. It was this "technical perfection" which seemed to work against the success of the film. Barry Lyndon was charged by critics and public alike as being cold and vacuous, a statement equally applicable to the cinemas in which the film played.

The Shining, however, has brought Kubrick back to the public's attention.

With the critical and commercial success of such films as *Carrie*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Dawn of the Dead*, *Alien* and *Halloween*, big-screen horror films have become respectable and commercially viable. A total overkill of space sagas spawned by *Star Wars* too, has sent the money men scrambling for a new hook to capture the public's imagination and horror seems to be it.

The Shining tells the story of Jack Torrance, a failed school teacher and would-be novelist who, with his wife and child, takes a job as winter caretaker of a luxurious hotel in Nevada, The Overlook. The child, Danny, is blessed (or cursed) with "the shining", a kind of mental telepathy.

The Overlook Hotel also happens to be haunted and soon has a deeply disturbing effect on the family, particularly the father and son.

After rejecting Stephen King's own screenplay, Kubrick wrote a new version with Diane Johnson and in so doing, changed much of King's original. No longer is Danny's "gift" as important to the plot as it was in King's novel. Gone too is the animal topiary which comes to frightening life at the novel's climax. Seemingly the technical aspects of such special effects defeated even Kubrick and the loping hedge monsters have been replaced by a maze for the film's chilling

denouement.

Kubrick's quest for technical perfection would also seem to have reached a new high with *The Shining*.

For months he rehearsed his cast and kept them isolated from the press and public. Denied even the dubious pleasures of the studio's staff restaurant, the cast and crew had their meals brought to them on the set.

For the set of the Overlook Hotel, Kubrick had production designer, Roy Walker, build a mammoth complex. Gone is King's Gothic-like architecture in favour of a gleaming 30's style elegance, beautifully lit by Kubrick's regular lighting cameraman, John Alcott. When Stephen King visited the studio in 1979 he was impressed with the set and the look of the production, particularly the snowbound exterior. In an interview in *Fangoria* magazine, he commented, "The sets are fantastic. They've put down thousands and thousands of bags of industrial salt; it looks and feels like snow underfoot, except it's warm. A unit went to Washington State and filmed a lot of stuff in a national park and came back and recreated the skyline on the backlot at the studio in England, it's really perfect."

Much of *The Shining* was filmed using the Steadicam, an invention of Garrett Brown and Cinema Products Corporation. The Steadicam is a new form of stabilized hand held camera brace which allows the operator to achieve smooth results in usually difficult situations. As early as 1974, Kubrick had seen a test reel of the Steadicam's possibilities and immediately cabled Cinema Products to count him as a customer.



The Steadicam is used throughout *The Shining* and proves particularly effective during the chase in the maze, though Kubrick's constant call for retakes exhausted the Steadicam operators.

Another Steadicam sequence which caused some problems for the operator, Garret Brown, is Danny's ride through the corridors of the Overlook. In a recent *American Cinematographer* interview, Brown recalls, "We needed to have the lens just a few inches from the floor and to travel rapidly just behind or ahead of the bike. I tried it on foot and found that I was too winded after an entire three-minute take to even describe what sort of last rites I would prefer!". Brown eventually mounted the camera on a special wheelchair dolly which Kubrick had helped design some years before. The result allowed the operator to get as close as one inch from the floor, achieving a truly stunning effect.

The Shining opened to great anticipation and mixed reviews in America. Some hailed it as a masterpiece of horror, while others dubbed it "the Jack Nicholson show". It would appear to be Nicholson's eye-rolling performance which seems to be taking most of the criticism. That august journal, *Cinefantastique*, referred to Jack's performance as a "baggy-pants burlesque of horror."

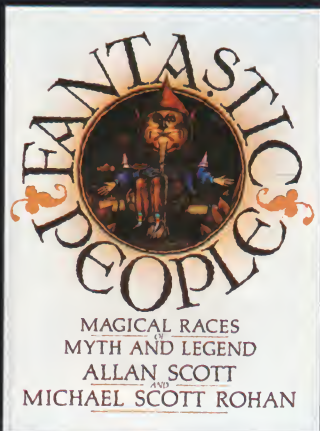
This may be so, of course. After a three month delay English audiences can now make up their own minds. Whatever their response, one thing is for sure: *The Shining* is a Stanley Kubrick film first, a horror film second. ●

Above: Wendy Torrance (Shelley Duvall), armed with a knife to protect herself cringes, in terror as her husband's axe splinters the door between them. Below: Wendy (Shelley Duvall) tries to comfort Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) as the *Overlook Hotel* begins to take hold of his mind. Opposite top: Young Danny Torrance (Danny Lloyd) solves the mystery of "Red Rum". Opposite left: Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) comes completely under the influence of *The Overlook*. Opposite right: Jack Nicholson and Stanley Kubrick discuss a scene on the set of *The Shining*.





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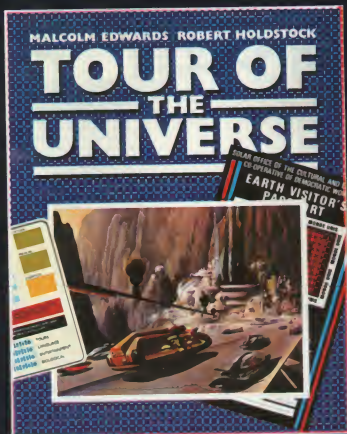
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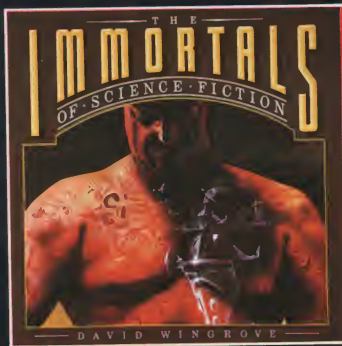
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THE FABULOUS
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HARRYHAUSEN



In 1933 a boy of thirteen saw Willis O'Brien's *King Kong*. The lad was so impressed that he began his own experiments in 3-dimensional animation. Not only would he later work with O'Brien, but would create a unique niche for himself in the history of the fantasy film. Phil Edwards looks at the career of master animator, Ray Harryhausen.

Ray Harryhausen began his film career in the late 30s, working for George Pal on the producer's famed *Puppetoons* series. A meeting with *King Kong*'s animation wizard, Willis O'Brien, further triggered Harryhausen's interest and a period of feverish experimentation with a 16mm camera ensued.

Following three years in the Army Signal Corps during WW2, Harryhausen made a series of short animated movies which he sold to clubs, schools, libraries and church groups. They included *Mother Goose Stories*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Rapunzel* and *King Midas*.

Willis O'Brien was so impressed with Harryhausen's enthusiasm, his fairy tales and experimental films of dinosaurs that he offered the young animator a job as assistant on a film he was planning to make, *Mr Joseph Young of Africa*, later retitled *Mighty Joe Young*.

Harryhausen spent two years with O'Brien on the film. From pre-production, through the designing of armatures, to being finally responsible for 85% of the animation footage included in the Academy Award winning feature.

Mighty Joe Young (1949) was a tongue-in-cheek variation on *King Kong*. It featured Robert Armstrong as a Carl Denham-like promoter who brings Joe Young, a twelve-foot tall gorilla, to the metropolis for a musical extravaganza. Of course, Joe falls foul of society, runs amok and is finally returned to his jungle home following various escapades. These include a spectacular battle with lions at the night club where he is "performing" and an exciting scene in which he rescues children from a burning orphanage.

For the film, Harryhausen used four large model apes 12" high and two smaller versions. O'Brien's long-time colleague, Marcel Delgado, carefully built up the model muscles on the armatures designed by Harryhausen and machined by Harry Cunningham.

Mighty Joe Young contains many fine examples of Ray's early techniques, perhaps the most impressive being the roping and capture of Joe by cowboys on horseback. Ray would refine this sequence for a similar scene in *The Valley of Gwangi* twenty years later.

In 1953, Harryhausen made the first film for which he received sole screen credit for technical effects. Based on a *Saturday Evening Post* short story by Ray Bradbury, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* was an independently produced feature. The 200,000 dollar Hal Chester/Jack Dietz production was picked up for distribution by Warner Bros who released it with a lavish ad campaign. The film proved highly successful.

Shot in black and white (though first-run releases were sepia-tinted), *The Beast*, for the most part, is a pedestrian affair, flatly directed by Eugene Lourie. Lourie was later responsible for *The Giant Behemoth* (1959), one of O'Brien's last films as animator, and the truly horrendous man-in-a-monster-suit movie, *Gorgo* (1961).

However, when Harryhausen's monster, a *Rhedosaurus*, makes its appearance, the film picks up tremendously and the animation action flows with extraordinary fluidity. Particularly memorable is the sequence in which the beast attacks a lonely lighthouse at night. The slam-bang finale, located amid a roller coaster in a Coney Island amusement park, features a young Lee Van Cleef as an army sharp-shooter destroying the beast with a well aimed radium isotope shell.

The film gave Ray Harryhausen the opportunity to experiment with a front projection system, elements of which would later be developed into the Dynamation process so familiar to Harryhausen fans.



Above: Ray Harryhausen. Opposite: The excellent poster artwork for Harryhausen's third *Sinbad* film, *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977). Below: Two of Harryhausen's dinosaurs prepare to do battle in *One Million Years BC* (1966).

In 1955 Ray Harryhausen met Charles Schneer, a producer at Columbia Pictures, through a mutual Signal Corps acquaintance. Schneer was interested in making a monster movie which featured a giant octopus and in Harryhausen found the ideal artist to bring such effects to the screen. In 1957 Schneer



became an independent producer, formed Morningside Productions and has been involved with Ray's films ever since.

The story of *It Came from Beneath the Sea* was little more than a re-run of *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* and once again was saved from mediocrity by Harryhausen's effects. The five-tentacled monster ("It was a small budget", Ray has commented several times regarding the three missing tentacles) launches itself on San Francisco and in a *tour-de-force* of animation effects, destroys the Golden Gate Bridge before being blitzed by man's best friend of the 1950s, the hydrogen bomb.

In 1956, with UFO paranoia at its peak, Schneer and Harryhausen produced *Earth vs the Flying Saucers*. The low-budget feature provided Ray with some interesting challenges.

Scripted by Curt Siodmak and directed by

20 Million Miles to Earth
featured a monster which many consider Harryhausen's most interesting and original creation.

B-veteran Fred Sears (who, the following year, lensed the schlock classic, *The Giant Claw*), *Earth vs the Flying Saucers* remains a classic alien invasion thriller, rivalling Pal's *War of the Worlds*.

"Two Billion Years in the Making," declared the ad campaign for Irwin Allen's semi-documentary, *The Animal World*, in 1957. For this film, Ray again collaborated with his mentor, Willis O'Brien, for a brief dinosaur sequence in an otherwise undistinguished feature. So dramatic and exciting was the Harryhausen/O'Brien footage that the entire publicity campaign for the film was built around it.

Harryhausen's next film, *20 Million Miles to Earth*, featured a monster which many consider his most interesting and original creation—the Ymir. Directed by Nathan Juran, *20 Million Miles to Earth* was the first Harryhausen film to overcome completely its

budgetary limitations by the sheer power of Ray's effects.

A spaceship crashlands back on Earth, one of its two pilots horribly disfigured. A small metal cannister is retrieved from the ship. Inside the cannister is a gelatinous, egg-like ball. From this emerges a small Venusian creature which rapidly grows in size to Kong-like proportions. Confused and angered by man's hostility towards it, the Ymir sets off on a spree of destruction and finally meets its death atop the Roman Colosseum, the victim of army bazookas and tanks.

The film contains many astonishing effects scenes: the "birth" of the bewildered creature, scaly claws rubbing its eyes at the light; and exciting confrontation with William Hopper in a barn; a battle between the Ymir and an elephant (half animated, half live-action) and the final battle with the army in Rome with its echoes of the climax of *King Kong*.

For their first independent production, Schneer and Harryhausen turned to the stories of the *Arabian Nights*. *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* presented some new problems to the ever-creative Harryhausen.

Seventh Voyage was the first Harryhausen feature to be filmed in Technicolor and Dyanimation, a process devised by Ray, which skillfully combined live-action with animation miniatures.

(Though *The Animal World* was filmed in colour, the table-top work of O'Brien and Harryhausen was completely done with miniatures and without the technical problems of front and rear projection.)

The film is composed of one set-piece after another, complete with wizards, dragons, a two-headed roc, the cyclops, a beautiful princess and handsome hero, Sinbad. One of the greatest displays of Ray's artistry is Sinbad's duel with a skeleton, gloriously scored by Bernard Herrmann. So realistic and frightening was the effect that the British Film Censor of the time decided to delete the sequence to gain the film a "U" Certificate. The scene was restored for later reissues.

Seventh Voyage of Sinbad proved so suc-



Below left: *The Ymir*, from *Twenty Million Miles to Earth* (1957), is floored by an elephant. Below: Caveman John Richardson pokes at a Harryhausen *Allosaurus* with a stick in *One Million Years BC* (1966). Below right: Ray Harryhausen surrounded by a few of his numerous creations. Above: *The Cyclops* from *Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (1959). Above right: The six-armed goddess Kali from *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (1974).





cessful that the year following its release, Edward Small produced **Jack the Giant Killer**, an almost scene-for-scene duplication. Small even hired Sinbad (*Kerwin Mathews*) for his hero.

Harryhausen was affected by this blatant rip-off of his techniques and to this day is completely guarded and secretive about his work.

With **Seventh Voyage** a resounding worldwide hit, Harryhausen and Schnier adapted Jonathan Swift's satirical classic, *Gulliver's Travels*, for the screen with Kerwin Mathews in the title role. Previously filmed in 1939 as a cartoon feature by Max Fleischer, the story lent itself naturally to the Dyanimation process.

The Three Worlds of Gulliver provided Ray with many opportunities to refine his optical techniques, as well as using animation and perspective photography.

A Jules Verne novel, *Mysterious Island*, was the basis for the next Superdyanimation adventure. A band of American Civil War POWs, escaping in a balloon, become caught in a storm and find themselves marooned on an uncharted tropical island, populated with giant animals. Various adventures with a giant crab, bees, a prehistoric bird, the Phororhacos (perhaps a tip-of-the-hat to O'Brien's early *Ghost of Slumber Mountain*) and a nautiloid cephalopod ensue.

The group discover the "mysterious" island is the last hideaway of Captain Nemo and his disabled submarine, *Nautilus*. The giant animals are the result of Nemo's experiments and the story climaxes with a spectacular volcanic eruption as the survivors escape in a refloated pirate ship.

For all its thrills and excitement however, **Mysterious Island** was in some ways a gap filler for the Harryhausen/Schnier team, for in retrospect, it seems that all of Ray's earlier films were a preparation for his next feature, **Jason and the Argonauts**.

Jason is reputed to be Harryhausen's own favourite and it is easy to understand why. Not only are the animation effects flawless in

their technical execution, but for the first time these sequences are completely integrated within the structure of the screenplay by Beverley Cross.

Todd Armstrong (dubbed throughout by another actor) makes a likeable and intelligent hero, battling various mythical creatures in his quest for the Golden Fleece.

Certainly the effects are stunning: the statue of Talos slowly coming to life to menace the Argonauts; the army of skeletons growing from the teeth of the dead Hydra to battle with Jason and his men; the horrific Harpies; the fight with the Hydra and Jason's meeting with the giant gods of Olympus.

However, **Jason's** real strength lies in its overall concept of a completely believable mythical world. Along with Korda's **Thief of Bagdad** (1940), **Seventh Voyage of Sinbad** and Lucas' **Star Wars** saga, it is one of fantasy

With the success of Jason and the Argonauts Harryhausen and Schnier turned to H.G. Wells for their next project.

cinema's few genuine fairy tale adventures.

With the worldwide success of **Jason**, it seems odd that Harryhausen and Schnier should turn to the work of H.G. Wells for their next project. Ray had wanted to film *The First Men in the Moon* for many years. However, it wasn't until author, Nigel Kneale, submitted a suitable script that Charles Schnier agreed to the project.

In some ways, the film is one of Ray's least successful ventures. Hindered by the Panavision anamorphic system, Harryhausen's creations lack their usual characterisation, although the split screen, matte and miniature work is of a very high standard. A pity, too, that the narrative drive of the story is delayed by a modern day (1965) prologue.

One Million Years BC was first filmed in 1940 by Hal Roach as **One Million BC**. In that production, Victor Mature and Lon Chaney Jr





Above: The original poster artwork for the film which, more than any other, can claim to have started Harryhausen on his path to fame and fortune: King Kong. Below: The giant nautilus which appeared in Mysterious Island (1961). Opposite above: The title star of Valley of the Gwangi (1969) takes the measure of his opponent, a triceratops. Opposite below: Director Jack Sher, producer Charles Schneer and Ray Harryhausen pose for a publicity picture on the set of Three Worlds of Gulliver (1960).



had slugged it out with optically enlarged lizards and men in dinosaur suits. When Hammer Films decided to remake the feature in 1966, they hired Ray Harryhausen to create the visual effects.

For the film Ray provided an entire menagerie of prehistoric monsters, including *Triceratops*, *Archelonisichyros*, *Ceratosaurs*, *Pterodactyls* and *Allosaurus*. A planned sequence with a *Brontosaurus* was discarded at the last moment, and much to the dismay of Harryhausen fans the first creature seen in the film is an optically enlarged iguana.

With a script (reputedly the same as the 1940 version) which consisted of grunts and growls, there was little else of worth to concentrate on besides Harryhausen's animation work and the delectable and now classic shots of Ms Welch in a fur bikini. The highlight of the film was Tumak's (John Richardson) battle with the *Allosaurus*.

In 1942 Willis O'Brien had begun pre-production on *Gwangi*, a lost world adventure which mixed dinosaurs and cowboys. After a year of planning, *Gwangi* was dropped by

Filmed in Majorca and Madrid, The Golden Voyage of Sinbad recaptured much of the magic of The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad.

RKO in favour of a production of *Little Orphan Annie*.

In 1968, Harryhausen and Schneer revived the project as *The Valley of Gwangi*. The film is probably the most under-rated Harryhausen feature of all and contains much of Ray's best work. He considers the sequence in which *Gwangi* (an *Allosaurus*) is roped by a team of cowboys to be the highlight of the film, and rightfully so. Taking a full five months to animate, the scene works in a completely believable way and is one of the great moments of fantasy cinema.

As the Ymir had fought an elephant in *Twenty Million Miles to Earth*, so did *Gwangi* in this film. However, this time the elephant was completely animated and the result was far more believable.

Unfortunately, *The Valley of Gwangi* was not a success critically or at the box office. In his book *Film Fantasy Scrapbook*, Harryhausen goes to some lengths to explain why he feels it failed. He places the blame on critics and the cinematic climate of the time, when the cinema had found a new promiscuity and youth culture features such as *Easy Rider* were at their peak. However, much of the film's failure rests with its distributors in providing it with a meagre publicity campaign and giving the film shoddy distribution. Certainly, it is the one Harryhausen feature now deserving a wider audience and critical reappraisal.

For *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* in 1974, Harryhausen and Schneer returned to the source which had given them one of their greatest hits. Filmed in Majorca and Madrid, *Golden Voyage* recaptured much of the magic of *Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*. *Barbarella*'s blind angel, John Phillip Law, was a fine substitute for Kerwin Mathews and Tom Baker made the most of the villainous wizard, Koura. Caroline Munro provided the romantic interest.

There is much to admire in *Golden Voyage*. The film carries a sense of mystery and



wonder quite unlike that of any other fantasy film. Douglas Wilmer's disfigured prince in a gold mask, Koura's spying Homunculus, the siren figurehead brought to life by Koura to destroy Sinbad's crew, the six armed goddess Kali, the Fountain of Destiny, the battle between the Centaur and the Griffin, all add to the credibility of Sinbad's adventures.

After Gwangi's disappointing display at the box office it was gratifying for Harryhausen and Schneer that *Golden Voyage* proved a smash hit and next to *Jason* the most successful Dynamation film thus far.

Hoping to duplicate this success, the team produced a further Sinbad adventure for Columbia Pictures. Sadly, *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* was not the film it might have been. Patrick Wayne (son of John) physically a dashing hero, made a poor Sinbad, delivering his lines in a completely mechanical manner.

Harryhausen's special effects, now called Dynarama, range from the superb troglodyte and baboon to the average Minotaur, played in some scenes by Peter "Chewbacca" Mayhew in a metal suit. Where *Eye of the Tiger* proved most disappointing however, was in its lack of a true sense of wonder.

The next announced Harryhausen fantasy was to have been *Sinbad on Mars*, a truly intriguing idea. However, the project has been temporarily shelved after MGM put up the money to make the most costly Dynarama adventure ever, *Clash of the Titans*.

Clash marks a return of the Greek mythology of *Jason* and the Charles Schneer production has gathered together an extraordinary roster of star names to support Ray's effects. The gods of Olympus are variously played by Lawrence Oliver, Maggie Smith, Ursula Andress and Claire Bloom. Harry Hamlin, of the *Studs Lonigan* mini-series, plays Perseus and Judy Bowker features as Andromeda.

The budget for *Clash of the Titans* is three



Below: The dinosaur from Valley of the Gwangi (1969) takes refuge in a church at the climax of the film. Right: A scene from the deleted Brontosaurus sequence in One Million Years BC (1966). Bottom: Ray Harryhausen on the set of Three Worlds of Gulliver (1960). Bottom right: The bronze giant Talos menaces Jason and the Argonauts (1963).



times that of a usual Harryhausen film, 9-million dollars, and has a shooting schedule of two years. The extended schedule allowed Ray time to complete some of the most intriguing effects and creatures he has yet devised. There is Pegasus the winged horse, Bubo, a super-intelligent owl, Diosbilos a two headed wolf-dog and the giant sea-monster, Kraken.

Clash is due to be released in mid-1981 and promises to be the most exciting Harryhausen adventure to date, launched with all the fanfare of a *Star Wars*.

Following **Clash of the Titans**, it is likely the Harryhausen/Schneer partnership will produce **Sinbad on Mars**, or some other "adventure beyond imagination". Whatever project the team decide, for fantasy fans all over the world will await the result: with great anticipation.

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TV ZONE TV ZONE TV ZONE

Here we are now in the midst of the "new shows for the Autumn season". Well, fairly new shows. And what are we given to chew on, in the 625-line department? About as much as Jonah had in the belly of the whale. Not a damn thing.

First of all, what do we actually have? Well, we have the great fun 'n' fantasy delights of *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Space Academy*, *Leap in the Dark*, *Doctor Who* and *Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World*.

Buck Rogers in the 25th Century: let's take this particular beast first. Is it new? No. Is it inventive? No. Are we being introduced to a whole new concept of tele-fantasy? No. So what the hell is it all about? (I could say it's about fifty minutes too long each week, but I won't.) It comes across as little more than the ramblings of an overaged hippie (circa '68) who has been given command over the scripts. The original ideas department/think tank get-togethers must have gone something like this: Now let's see. What we have out there are a bunch of suckers who are either too young to associate with the original comic strip or are too old and senile to remember seeing Buster Crabbe going through his antics in the 1939 Universal chapter-play. So we rehash the good old format and bring it up to date with some snappy, hip dialogue. Of course, we make good old Buck look like a cool guy, in complete control of his emotions and hair-style. Then we toss in some really lusty-looking girls with sprayed-on outfits, some relate-to-current-date material and, bingo, we've got it. The all-round popular show? Uh, oh, that's not it, pals.

Battlestar Galactica: now this is a case of drinking the blood from the jagged edge. This show is not only a beautiful variation of the above nonsense but what must be the ultimate fan/disciple of Mr Lucas's *Star Wars*. Okay, now let's see what we have here. We have a bunch of bedouin intergalacticers on the run from the bad guys. This mind-shattering concept is then laced with a couple cool-looking macho types, some more lusty ladies (probably the most exciting ingredient in these shows), and all the special effects fireworks that they can muster (budget-wise). All this so that the dopey fans (those who long for hero figures and their own tv mythology) can not only drool and dribble over the starring roles but also groove on the *Star*



Wars-like effects. Toss in some laser-type weaponry, some fighter-cockpit tension and, zappo, we have lift off. Good grief, is this really what life is all about?

Space Academy. What can anyone say about this, the most stupid of stupid shows? Any tv buff will at first see Jonathan Harris, going through his putrid paces, and think, hey, I remember him, he was good in the *Third Man* tele-series (circa '59) and nothing short of superb in *Lost in Space*. So where the hell did he go wrong? Who put the curse of Amon-Ra on him? I figure he's either got himself a lousy agent or was looking for money to buy a new yacht or a plot of land in Bolivia, or something. Let me get the idea of this show together. It is the year 3732. (I wonder who picked this date, and why?) It is the story of a group of space cadets, the Nova Blue Team, assigned to a man-made (would you believe?) planetoid space academy. It is the story of their training, their experiences, as they patrol and explore their version of the galaxy. Along with these cadets we have not only a playground of child actors but a dippo robot called Peepo. And that's exactly what the damn things makes me want to do. Did I say at one time that Return of the Saint was the greatest

waste of tv electricity to date? Let me re-order that one — *Space Academy* is like waking up, watching it, and then thinking that you're still asleep. When this one airs it's time to get a soft cushion and turn up the gas.

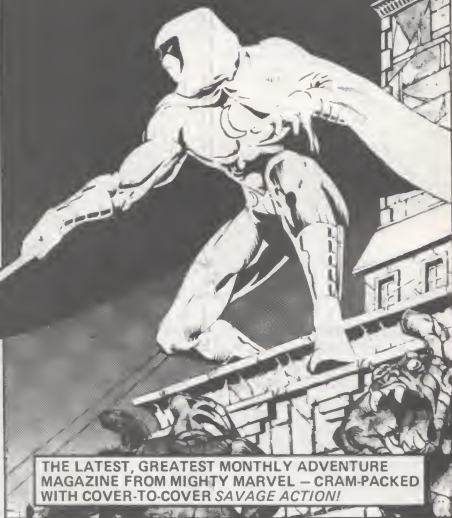
Dr Who. Well, I used to have my bitch about this but have since gotten over it. I used to think that it was one of the dumbest shows on earth, but that's all changed now. I'm hooked. Having always considered that *film* is what it's all about, in most every sense, I believed that anything shot on video and using theatrical-type sets had to be boring and silly. (For the record, I remember sitting through the very first episode, way back '63, and saying 'Wow,' or whatever it was that I said when I got excited at the age of 14.) Now that we have good old Tom Baker in the title role, along with his delightful, lusty assistants, the show opens up whole new avenues of fun 'n' fantasy. It remains one of the most imaginative and amusing series currently running on British television. And long may it travel.

Leap in the Dark is not exactly a new, hot-off-the-griddle item but it manages to deliver the goods intact. This series is probably the best of the current crop of

39



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RAY BRADBURY

INTERVIEW BY JOHN BAXTER

Breakfast with Bradbury is an event worth remembering. Courtesy of our publishers, coffee and croissants are consumed with the world's most popular living science fiction writer in the plush surroundings of Kensington's Royal Garden Hotel amid lushness enough to make one feel amiable even at eight-thirty in the morning.

Ray Bradbury's cordiality is unfailing. With white thigh, ice-cream suit and immaculate buckskin shoes he doubles for the library-haunting Charles Halloway of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*; he acknowledges that an adolescence of library browsing accounted for all his post-graduate schooling and for his free-wheeling way with ideas.

His enthusiasm for the space programme, for Walt Disney and his dreams, for the worth of science fiction as a fund of concepts and metaphors for society is undimmed by contemporary cynicism. He's still the enthusiast who will deluge a favourite director with his books and invitations to render them into film, who can be awed and elated by watching the Viking lander settle on the surface of Mars. Twenty-five years ago Damon Knight summed-up Bradbury in terms still applicable today: "Bradbury, the grown-up child who still remembers, still believes."

His cinema career is notable more for works unrealised than for definite landmarks; few artists can have expended more effort for less concrete results. He spent months working with Carol Reed on an un-filmed adaptation of his story *And The Rock*

Cried Out, about hapless tourists trapped in a hostile South American culture after the Bomb, and even longer doctoring Nicholas Ray's *King of Kings* with a much-needed narration. (When asked to find a new ending for the epic, he asked "Have you thought of checking out the Bible?") The producers said, "We still need you."

But Bradbury continues to believe in the movies, despite decades of rough handling for his works, the latest a three-part TV series of *The Martian Chronicles*, produced by NBC on cut-rate locations in Europe and the Mediterranean. Even the author has been scathing about it; I decided to begin on film projects prudently further from home.

Starburst: *It's a paradox that you're still best-known in sf film circles for two films that gave you very little credit; The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms and It Came from Outer Space both made in 1953.*

Ray Bradbury: *The Beast* was a weird kind of accident. I went to see the producer about a script he'd written but wanted me to revise. He sent me into a room to read it. When I came out I said "It's interesting". And he said "Will you revise it for us?" I said "Well, perhaps. It's very like a short story of mine that was in the *Saturday Evening Post* a year or so back called *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*". (My title was *The Fog Horn*. I never approved of theirs.) He had a funny look on his face, and I realised that, inadvertently - I guess - he'd taken my idea, put it in the script - and called me in to revise it!

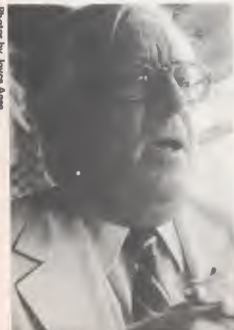
There was no fight or anything, and no accusations, but the next day he sent me a cable saying "We want to buy the rights" and they bought them. I had no control over the script though. The best part of the film is Ray Harryhausen's animation.

On *It Came from Outer Space*, they called me in because they wanted to do a science fiction film. William Alland had an idea I didn't much care for, and we had a few friendly arguments. I finally said "Look, I'll write two scripts. I'll spend two weeks, and I'll do the first thirty pages of my version and the first thirty pages of yours. But then you've got to make up your mind between the two within forty-eight hours". I did a very nice version of their idea, but I did a better one of mine, of course, and, by God, they went my way and let me finish my script.

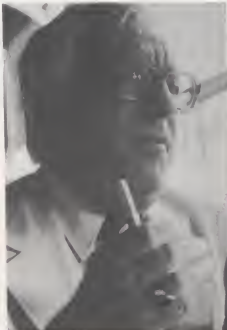
But like a fool I gave them a ninety-five page outline treatment. That was the whole screenplay, and they got it for \$3000. The Harry Essex came in to write it and got the credit. I was foolish.

The film stands up very well. A lot of the lines are recognisably your work.

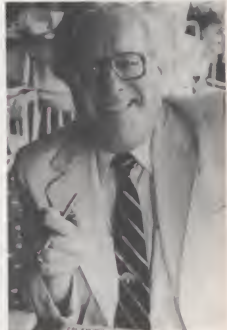
Well, three years ago, the night after the first preview of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, I called Steven Spielberg, whom I didn't know. I'd just written a review of the film, and I said "I just have to meet you and tell you what a genius you are and give you a copy of this review". So I ran over to the studio and walked into his office and he said "Well, how do you like your film?" I said "What do you mean?" He said, "If you hadn't done *It Came*



"I've written a new play version of *Fahrenheit* which was in LA eight months ago. It's the best stage work I've ever done."



"I have the rights to *The Illustrated Man* back again and I'm going to remake it eventually. So help me, I will."



"Now we're waiting for Steven Spielberg to do *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. He's promised to do it sometime next year."

From Outer Space, I would never have done this".

One of the best things I ever saw covering your work was a black and white tv episode in David Wolper's *The Story of...series*.

Yes. *The Story of a Writer*. Beautiful. I wanted to show how the idea for a story is born and develops in the writer's mind. Wolper gave me a young director and I sat with him for two or three days, at which point I was embarrassed. Finally, I leaned forward and said "Hey, I want to ask you something. Have you ever read anything of mine?"

"Uh, well no."

"One novel?"

"No."

"Short story? Two line poem? Maybe my obit?"

"No."

I said "You can't do this then, can you? You haven't done your research, I might as well produce and direct it too. I'm sorry, but I'll have to have you fired". Wolper fired him and brought in Terry Saunders. I worked very closely with him. We had wonderful rapport.

But to end the story, I was at a screening three years ago and this young director came running up to me. He introduced himself and I blushed immediately. He said "The best thing ever happened to me was you firing me. It made me go and study, become a better filmmaker". And he's just finished his first major film.

I'll never forget the beautiful animated film from Joe Mugnaini's drawings; Icarus
Montgolfier Wright.

Joe's illustrated eight of my books. We all

"Truffaut said, I can't get backing for *The Illustrated Man* but let's do *Fahrenheit*."

worked free on that for two or three years. I love it. If I was doing it over today, I'd cut two or three minutes out of it. Nevertheless, that said, it has some moments that move me immensely, even after all this time.

It was up for an Academy Award in 1962, but I'm a total realist when it comes to these things. I went to screenings at the Academy of all the short subjects and when we came out friends were flocking about saying "Ray, you're gonna get the Oscar". And I said "No way. John Hubley's *The Hole* is going to get it! It's ten years behind the times. It's safe. It's liberal. It's got a black, it's got nuclear power, it's got The Bomb - all those cliches. And ours is set in the future;" (This was before *Apollo* and everything.)

On the night of the Awards, Joe and I brought our daughters and sent them in with our tickets. And sure enough Hubley's film won. Joe swore all the way home.

*Did you know Francois Truffaut before he made *Fahrenheit 451*?*

I knew him and his work. We'd had meetings in New York five or six years before he made *Fahrenheit*. We hoped to do a film of short sketches together; we were going to make *Illustrated Man*. But he couldn't get financing for it. I wish he had.

He came back and said "I can't get backing for this, but let's do *Fahrenheit*." He wanted me to write the script, but I'd already done a stage play of it and I knew I couldn't handle a thing twice over such a short period of time. The script is very good. It has a few flaws, which I've told him about. It's a little soft in the middle. There's something wrong with some



Above: The firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* speed on their way to start a fire. The story is set in the future when books are outlawed and are incinerated upon discovery. Below: Richard Carlson comes face to face with two extra-terrestrials in *It Came From Outer Space* (1953).

of those scenes with Julie Christie. When the semi-romance is going on, I thing things get a little over-explained.

But otherwise, gee whizz! A lot of good stuff. The scene of the fire chief talking about the libraries, sweeping the books off. And all the burning scenes.

Fahrenheit 451 has one of the greatest endings in the history of the cinema. I don't say that because it's my film - that's Truffaut's ending, not mine. Beautiful. I cry every time I see it. It's like the ending of *Citizen Kane*, or *Sunset Boulevard*, where Norma Desmond comes down the stairs into the camera and it cracks your heart.

I've written a new play version of *Fahrenheit* which was in LA eight months ago. It's the best stage work I've ever done. I let my characters write the play, as I do most of my things, and the fire chief came to me one afternoon and said "Ray, you know, we haven't talked for about twenty-six years, and there's a lot about me I didn't tell you when

you wrote the novel".

"Oh, really?" I said, "Let's hear it". And he took over the play. Now he dominates the story; he's really the dark hero. Montag is moved - not back, but to one side. They share the stage.

*Do you regard Jack Smight's *Illustrated Man* as a pretty-well disastrous experience?*

Yes. I have the rights back again and I'm going to remake it eventually. So help me, I will. (I also have the rights to *Fahrenheit* again too.) Some of the framing material is OK, but they start all the stories in the middle. They don't make any sense.

*I want to ask you about *The Martian Chronicles*, but I guess you've told that story about two hundred times in the past month. Well, I'll make up something new for you. We're gonna lie a lot this morning! The project's been around for some time, hasn't it?*

Back when the book was published, in 1950, John Houseman called me over to MGM - he



WITH GOOD WISHES TO
THE "STARBURST"
READERS! FROM
Ray Bradbury



This page: *It Came From Outer Space* (1953). Top: Richard Carlson interrupts the extra-terrestrials as they work on their damaged space-craft. Above left: The true form of the aliens, *The Xenomorph*. Above right: The poster for *It Came From Outer Space*.

was a producer there then — to talk about the *Chronicles*. He was trying to get Vincente Minnelli interested in directing it. I still don't know why that never happened. People sort of wander off into the sunset.

And then, in 1957, I adapted it as a Broadway musical for David Susskind. I worked on it two or three months with Sidney Carroll, who's a fine American short story writer, and Leonard Rosenman, the composer, who did movie scores like *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause*. About three months into the project, Susskind called me and said "Let's laugh this up a little. Let's make it funny".

I said "This isn't a comedy. It's closer to *Carousel*, if you want something to compare it with. Serious musical drama". I realised it was hopeless, so I gave him back his money to get out of the deal.

The Kirk Douglas came along. He owned it for a year. He wanted to make a tv series, but nothing ever happened.

About 1960, I worked on it at MGM for

about six months, writing a screenplay. I predicted that as soon as I turned in the script I'd be fired, and I was. It wasn't a great script, but it was OK.

When Alan Pakula and Bob Mulligan did *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which I loved, I wrote them a letter saying "I think your film is terrific. Let's talk".

"NBC said, 'It's time to do something of yours and do it right. We promise you.' Blood oaths!"

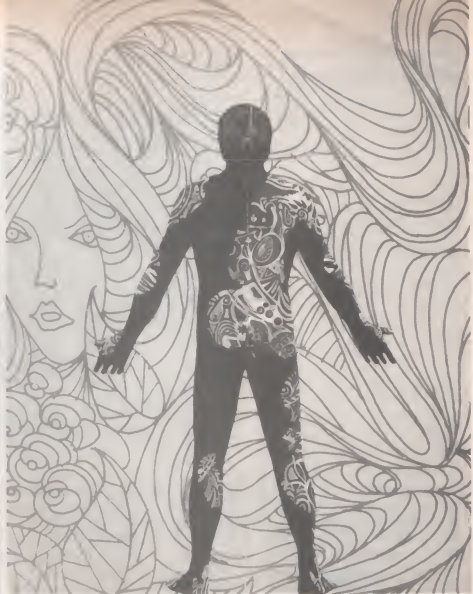
They called me back and said "We've been thinking about *The Martian Chronicles*. Let's do it". So I spent more than a year, on and off, on a script for them. But I handed it in some time in 1962, just as the results of the first viking photo survey of Mars were published. Of course, it showed nothing. No canals. No vegetation. And all the people at the studios when they saw our script said "Why bother

with a dead planet?" It enraged me, but there's nothing you can do with that sort of argument.

So Pakula and Mulligan went away, and in the middle sixties Jean-Louis Barrault showed up, and he decided to put it on stage at L'Odeon in Paris. They had the sets built. They sent me sketches. Ten foot tall marionettes playing the Martians; they looked fantastically good. But this was 1968 and the students invaded L'Odeon. That was the end of all their projects, and Barrault moved out. Several years later it was put on stage in Paris in another version. It ran for the better part of a year.

Finally, in the last few years, I had my own production of the *Chronicles* on stage in America, which turned out very well. We did it in Los Angeles three years ago.

So we wind up, very late in time, with *The Martian Chronicles* on television. NBC came to me four years ago, the day the Viking lander came down on Mars, which was a vulnerable day for me. I'd been up all night, waiting for the final pictures to come in at the



This page: *The Illustrated Man* (1968). Above: The poster artwork for the film. Left: A team of artists work on Rod Steiger using watercolours to achieve the tattooed effect. Below: The tattooed Steiger was used as a link between three weak adaptations of Bradbury short stories.

Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and there was the elation of knowing it was down OK, and functioning.

NBC said "It's time to do something of yours and do it right. We *promise* you". Blood oaths – that sort of thing. So I went ahead with the project.

Was it very differently conceived originally?
Well, I made them promise to use a friend of mine, Richard Matheson, to do the screenplay. He turned in a very good script. What finally happens is, when a director gets his hands on a script, there are changes made that have nothing to do with the original screenwriter.

Some parts have been left alone. Some parts work remarkably well. There's a wonderful sequence in the second section, about a priest on Mars and a vision of the ghost of Christ – a combination of *The Fire Balloons* and another story of mine, *The Messiah*. It works very well. It's very touching.

The whole thing has just enough beautiful scenes to make you ache around the edges that there weren't ten times more.



What's the state of play on *Something Wicked This Way Comes*?

I finished the screenplay three years ago, with Jack Clayton working with me, and whom I dearly love. I've known him since *Moby Dick*. We got caught in the crossfire between two heads of Paramount studios, David Picker and Barry Diller, and when you're caught between moguls like that, you'd better leave. Whatever this one likes, the other doesn't.

The script was finished, everyone was happy, and Kirk Douglas, who put up some of the money, was delighted. When everything fell apart, Kirk bought up all the rights, Jack came back to England, almost died from various diseases, but luckily recovered and got involved in other films. Now we're waiting for Steven Spielberg to do

Something Wicked; he's promised to do it next year some time, and I hope he will. He's a good person for it. There's about six people I'd trust with it — Clayton, Spielberg, and David Lean, if he would only make more films, which I wish he would, because I've seen everything of his twenty times over.

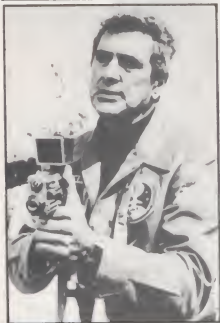
I finally met David Lean in Hollywood, when he was working on *Doctor Zhivago*, and I gave him several of my books; **Something Wicked, The Martian Chronicles**. He wrote back a charming little note: "Just not my cup of tea" which broke my heart. But if someone's polite, that's all you ask. And if they're not meant for you, then what a shame. But it's a horrible thought knowing I'll go to the end of my life not working for this man.



Above: Francois Truffaut demonstrates the finer points of pole-sliding on the set of *Fahrenheit 451*. Below: Rock Hudson as he appears in *The Martian Chronicles*.

A VIEW FROM THE TV ZONE

by Tise Vahimagi



I get the feeling that someone should have inserted a Texas-type cattle drive led off course by Dennis Weaver into the colonial goings-on in the three-part *Martian Chronicles*.

The show may then have come closer to what its basic format end theme appeared to, unintentionally, resemble. Centennial, Martian style.

This three-part mini-series based on the intriguing 1951 Ray Bradbury novel had some curious scenes, some poor visual effects and some very odd and nifty characters. Covering the period 1999 to 2007, the stories relate the initial NASA exploration flights to the red planet, the fate of the early explorers, the colonisation of the planet, and the Earth peoples' first encounters with Martians.

The imaginative thoughts, feelings and enthusiasm that probably went into this production may be found lurking somewhere in the 270-odd minutes of the show but the overall result, however, arrives something like a lukewarm dinner — eagerly awaited but eventually disappointing. One suspects that Richard Matheson's teleplay started out good-and-healthy but by the time it had travelled the carnivorous desks of executive producers Charles Fries & Dick Berg and producers Andrew Bonelly & Milton Subotsky it had not only aged but withered to the point beyond resuscitation. Only voodoo could have revived it to its original Dick Matheson/ Ray Bradbury form.

Some memorable Mathesonque moments remain, to be sure, but there are also some rather silly and illogical scenes during the show. Pouring acid on screen work is always too easy, and something of a cop-out, so why dwell on giving something bad reviews? (Besides, no one ever set out to write/produce/direct a bad movie, or telefilm.) As those of you with a glimmer of intelligence behind your eyes will already know.

In the good review department there are a few scenes that have taken hold, firmly, in the memory. (1) The Martian appearing as the canal-dwelling couple's dead son during the horrendous reinstorm, illuminated eerily by

flashes of lightning (do they get lightning on Mars, though?). (2) Chris Connelly wandering aimlessly through the deserted town, kicking empty cans and tossing away now-worthless money. One can just see the Robert Neville character from Matheson's brilliant *I Am Legend* being reborn on the small-screen.

These are some of the creative and atmospheric Matheson moments, remaining in the mind as rare extracts of Matheson genius as well as being some of *Martian Chronicles'* all-too-rare high spots.

Darren McGavin, one of the most durable and accomplished of teleplayers, presents probably the most colourful and at the same time lunatic character in the show, playing a rhinestone cowboy-hamburger emperor. It's a rather sad situation; McGavin gets himself a fleshy, western-style bar-and-grill (plus an enormous land grant from some mysterious Martians) and is just panting for the stampe of space travellers from Earth, when good old third-from-the-sun is suddenly seen blasted to dead rock.

Martian Chronicles could have been fun, but it wasn't. Given the space of around six hours it should have been marvellous (in its most literary sense), but it wasn't. All the ingredients were there, like some outer space casserole, but what happened? An *el cheapo* combination of budget-worry (it appeared), a fear of flying (flying into imaginative and amazing film-making), and the paranoia of keeping in tune with the Mickey Mouse soap-opera ratings, thus not alienating potential viewer-sundance. If that's the way it also appeared to you, then it's like producing *War and Peace* for a six hour format and translating it into a game of hopscotch in a schoolyard.

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BOOK WORLD

THIS MONTH REGULAR BOOK CRITIC
JOHN BOWLES LOOKS AT THE NEW
NOVEL FROM JOAN VINGE AND THREE
RUSSIAN SF OFFERINGS.

The science fiction world, particularly in the USA is forever on the lookout for the latest blockbuster—this year's *Dune* or *Stranger in a Strange Land*. 1980's candidate is undoubtedly *The Snow Queen* by Joan D. Vinge, whose British edition (Sidgwick & Jackson, £6.95) comes garlanded with the usual enthusiastic comments. Arthur Clarke compares it to *Dune*, Anne McCaffrey wishes she'd written it herself, Theodore Sturgeon mysteriously compares reading Vinge (which rhymes with stinky, in case you were wondering) to "running the hands over satinwood".

Well, maybe Sturgeon has a point, because if I had to choose a single adjective to describe *The Snow Queen* "wooden" would very probably be the one. It has all the ingredients of an epic of romance, but the way in which they are cobbled together smacked to me more of calculation than conviction. Scene after scene evoked memories of similar—but rather better—passages in other novels.

The setting is a planet, Tiamat, which describes a complex orbit around two suns and a local black hole. It is linked to a farflung galactic empire by spaceship traffic through the black hole, but its access to the technology of that empire is severely limited. It has two cultures—the bucolic Summers and the rather more sophisticated Winters—whose ascendancy varies according to Tiamat's position in its long orbit. *The Snow Queen* of the title is the ruler of the Winters, and she, like certain select offworlders, has access to virtual immortality through inhaling a substance obtained from the blood of one of Tiamat's sea-creatures, the semi-intelligent mer.

Around this familiar but not unpromising setting Vinge weaves what should be a story of satisfying complexity. But the telling is leaden: the characters are uninteresting, the prose

lifeless (and sometimes downright awful). It's a great disappointment, because Vinge has proved herself a competent writer in the past (her first novel, *The Outcasts of Heaven's Belt*, is an enjoyable space adventure). However, in fairness I should note that other judges, whose opinions I respect, disagree with me totally about this novel. You might too. I should also say that it comes in an unusually handsome edition for a novel published in this country, and at £6.95 for 536 pages is good value in these inflationary days.

The late summer is one of the quite periods of the publishing year. One thing it has brought this year, however, is a minor flood of Russian sf titles. Most of these are the product of a programme undertaken by Collier-Macmillan in co-operation with the Soviet Writers' Union, and can thus be considered authorized translations. This batch includes novels by some of Russia's best-known sf writers: *Professor Dowell's Head* by Alexander Beliaev (£4.55) and *The Ugly Swans* by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky (paperback, £1.95). Meanwhile from Gollancz appears another Strugatsky novel, *The Snail on the Slope* (£6.50). So, how does the best from the East measure up?

Not really too well on this showing, I'm afraid. To take the least first, Beliaev's novel is a fairly entertaining but ludicrous adventure concerning an evil scientist who has stolen a technique for keeping heads alive after separation from their bodies, and now has the head of the real inventor—the Professor Dowell of the title—securely strapped to his laboratory bench. Its main redeeming feature is that it was written fifty years ago, but the general level of the story is more reminiscent of a 1930s horror film than anything else.

The Strugatskys are another matter: their work is dense, complex and difficult to read. *The Snail on the Slope* is generally considered one of their finest works, and on one level—an investigation of a very strange Forest on another planet—it's one of the relatively few sf novels which gives a real sense of the alien. Unfortunately, in my view, that part of the novel is counterpointed by a satire on bureaucracy of the

sort in which Eastern European authors seem to revel (I wonder why?) but which translate very badly. *The Ugly Swans*—about a group of superchildren—is rather more straightforward, but rather less interesting. If I had to recommend a Strugatsky novel, it would still have to be the really impressive *Roadside Picnic*, available in paperback from Penguin. This is the basis of the new Tarkovsky film, *Stalker*, whose British release I await with some eagerness. If it captures half the mood of the book it should be worth going a long way to see.

In the first of these columns I promised a regular look at the plans of one or other of our paperback publishers—a promise I promptly had to break last issue because of the habit paperback editors have of disappearing to exotic climes during the summer. This time, however, I managed to corner Colin Murray of Sphere Books to find out what they have in the offing. Sphere, of course, are responsible for the major commercial success of the year in sf; the novel of *The Empire Strikes Back*. Inevitably, another spinoff from the film is due in November, an illustrated journal describing the making of the movie entitled *Once Upon a Galaxy*, by Alan Arnold.

But despite the success of Lucasfilm products Sphere, like most other publishers, are having to tread very carefully through their fantasy and sf, though unlike some they are still buying and publishing books. Towards the end of the year they are reissuing M. John Harrison's excellent fantasy novel, *The Pastel City*, and following it with a brand-new sequel, *The Storm of Wings*. They also have an anthology edited by Robert Shekley—*After the Fall*—which consists of cheerful end of the world stories! Early 1981 sees a new edition of David Lindsay's extraordinary visionary fantasy *A Voyage to Arcturus*—if you don't love it you'll probably hate it, but either way you ought to try it—but the best news for fantasy fans is that during the year they will be issuing paperback editions of Roger Zelazny's *Amber* series, three of which will be appearing in paperback for the first time in this country.

After completing this column I'm off to the USA for the annual world science fiction convention, so next month I expect to be able to bring you news gleaned from there, including the winners of this year's Hugo awards.

ALSO RECEIVED

The Ruins of Isis by Marion Zimmer Bradley (Arrow, £1.35); *Mission to Moulokin* by Alan Dean Foster (NEL, £1.35); *The Black Cloud* by Fred Hoyle (Penguin, 95p); *The Best of Trek 2*, ed. Walter Irwin and G.B. Love (Signet, £1.95); *Self-Discovery* by Vladimir Sevchenko (Collier-Macmillan, £2.50); *The Women/Kovregin's Chronicles* by Vadim Shefner (Collier-Macmillan, £5.95); *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* by Jules Verne (Penguin, 95p); *The Web Between the Worlds* by Charles Sheffield (Sidgwick & Jackson, £6.95); *The Planet Masters* by Allen Wald (Sidgwick & Jackson, £6.50).



Left: The cover to the Sidgwick and Jackson book, *The Snow Queen*. Above: The *Snow Queen* author, Joan D. Vinge.

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If science fiction is going to continue to be a major portion of the films released every year, it is essential that the sf movies begin to be made on all budget levels. Otherwise, when one of these enormously-budgeted extravaganzas fails spectacularly, the genre will suddenly look less attractive to investors.

Fortunately, in the United States we're starting to see a small number of relatively low-budget sf films, some even with stories set in space. And if these are successful—well, a cardinal rule in Hollywood is that everyone wants to be first to be second. Let someone else take the risks, and when those risks pay off, imitators as well as more imaginative producers will take the lead and the risk-taker's big moneymaker will have children, as it were.

A new risk-taker has entered the film production scene, Grayson Productions, Inc. headed by Ashley Grayson and a partner. Working out of the GPI building on Melrose

Avenue in Hollywood, Grayson has set in motion several interesting projects in the fantastic film genre. The major effect is being devoted to *Starhunt*, a planned feature based on the novel *Yesterday's Children* by David Gerrold. Also on the GPI agenda is a haunted house horror film (with sf overtones), tentatively titled *Nightmare Manor*. This is in the same vein as *The Haunting* and *Legend of Hell House*, and we'll be covering it more closely in the future.

In late August, *Starburst's* Hollywood correspondent Bill Warren interviewed Ashley Grayson, Mark Nelson, the producer of *Starhunt* and Ged Oswald, the Hollywood veteran who is to direct the modestly-budgeted war-in-space story.

Ashley Grayson and Mark Nelson kindly

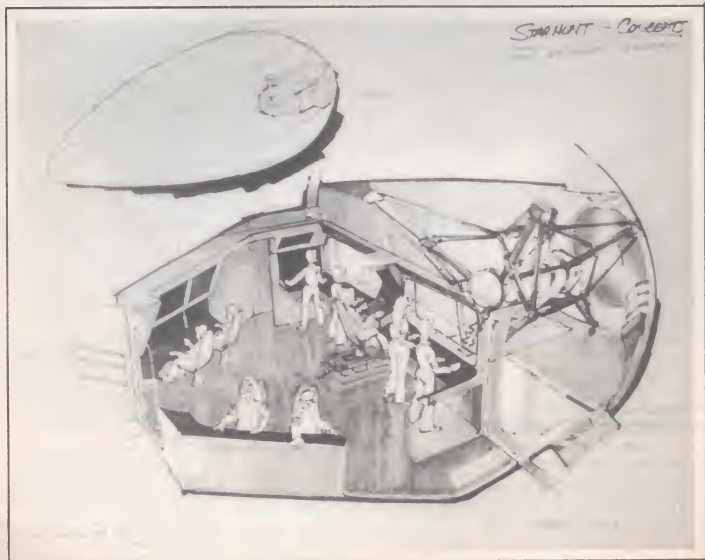
A special report from
Starburst's new
Hollywood Correspondent
Bill Warren.

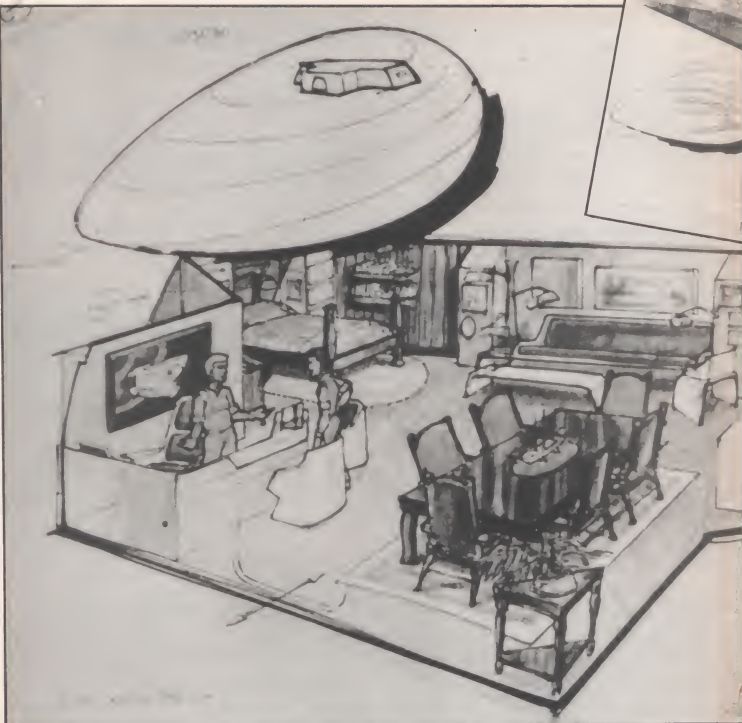
provided us with some of the illustrations you see here. Andy Probert produced these production illustrations, and when the film goes into production, he is expected to remain with the film as principal designer. Probert worked in design on *Star Trek—the Motion Picture*, as well as on *Battlestar Galactica*.

Although it turned out better than anyone really expected, low-budget films like *Battle Beyond the Stars* really aren't the kind of film the science fiction genre needs if it is to prove a staple part of Hollywood's output. It's simply too derivative.

On the other hand, *Starhunt* shows a willingness to try to film other kinds of stories altogether while still staying within the basic space-adventure format. It's not a copy of *Star Wars*, it's instead something old and new, at once. And the idea that someone is willing to try this kind of story is very promising for the future of science fiction films.

THE MAKING OF STARHUNT





Above: The design drawing for the recreation room aboard the starship the *Roger Burlingame*. Top: A concept design for a stretch of corridor aboard the space ship.

Starburst: Why did you decide to become a producer, Ashley?

Ashley Grayson: I was working for a computer company, and became involved in *Star Trek—The Motion Picture*, because they needed some computer expertise applied to their special effects. I saw what was going on and said, "Gee, these people are screwed up." I could help unscrew them, but you can't

unscrew people that badly screwed up by being rational. You have to be intimidating as well, and the greatest intimidation comes from being a producer because they get to call all the shots. So my feeling is that if you're going to get into the movie business, you may as well get in at the top because once you're there, you control everything, and all you have to be is almost right most of the time.

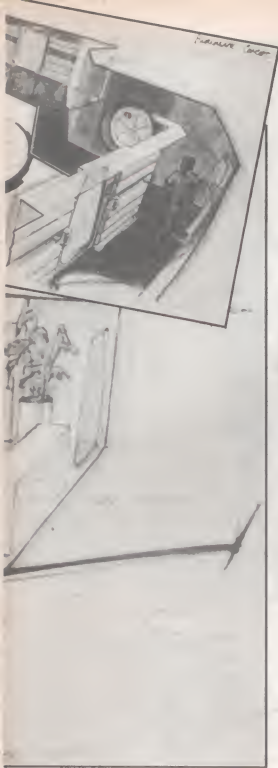
Starburst: Why *Starhunt*?

Grayson: We wanted a picture that we could make for a small amount of money, that would use a small number of actors and actresses on a limited number of sets, so that we would minimize all of the things that could possibly go wrong in making a first film. Also, with *Starhunt* having a computerized starship as part of the plot allowed us to use our expertise

in computer graphics, to generate computer graphic effects that would give the movie a unique look that would win everybody's attention. And since we controlled the computer technology, it wouldn't cost too much.

Starburst: How did you happen on David Gerrold's novel *Yesterday's Children as a property*?

Grayson: I've been reading science fiction for fifteen or twenty years or so, and remembered that book when I read it as being one that would make a neat movie. Since I knew Dave Gerrold from hanging around science fiction conventions, I talked to him about what he was doing. At the time, he was pushing another of his novels, *Deathbeast*, as a film property, but was interested in doing a movie deal on his other writings. He picked Yes-



terday's *Children* to make as *Starhunt* because it had all the requisite elements. There were a small number of people in the cast, and it was essentially all one very large set, and it could all be done as interiors.

Starburst: Ashley, why do you think that science fiction novels aren't bought for filming, for the most part? I have my own theories.

Grayson: I think that's due to the fact that one of the prime features of a good science fiction story is that it deals heavily with the intellectual involvement of some person or persons with some kind of complicated intellectual problem, or some concept that's hard to get across visually in ninety minutes to a bunch of people who don't read. One of my favourite science fiction novels is *The*

Demolished Man by Alfred Bester. Now, I understand there are some people who are trying to make it into a movie, and I hope they succeed. But it's very difficult, because part of the joy of that book is the fact that the people are telepaths and all of the interesting things that happen are in Ben Reich's own mind. A lot of other science fiction stories are just too grandiose to do, such as Larry Niven's *Ringworld*; there are other difficulties with some of the other more interesting books, such as Hal Clement's *Needle*.

Starburst: It seems that you are entering into a new kind of science fiction film production, intelligent low-budget features.

Grayson: One of our feelings is that a movie doesn't have to cost ten or twenty million dollars to be good — if you have a story. The complaints that I've heard from all my friends who are science fiction fans is that science fiction films are weak on story. And we thought if we could get some good science fiction stories that would convert to the screen, we wouldn't have to do a lot with special effects, and would thereby keep the budget down. Also, we're not trying to replace a story with a big-name but inappropriate actor or actress or a lot of special effects to take everybody's mind off the fact that the real storyline doesn't make any sense.

Starburst: Mark Nelson, how did you become involved as producer of *Starhunt*?

Mark Nelson: When Ashley started his motion picture company, he didn't have any production background, so he hired me to come in as line producer on *Starhunt* to act in that capacity during the packaging of the deal. Script, budget, the director, and the entire presentation package, which would then be presented to either investors or studios, to get the financial backing to do the film.

Starburst: What is your previous background?

Nelson: My background is in radio production, the entertainment field. And also, for the last five years, I've been doing just exactly what Ashley needs: putting together proposals and budgets and breakdowns for the Public Broadcasting System (the American non-commercial television network) and different organizations on speculation for feature and television projects. Another major thing is Ashley's other project, a horror film, *Nightmare Manor*. It's one that a friend of mine and I wrote. And for the last three or four years I've been gathering material for a book on Hammer Films, which would be different in approach from the very good one by David Pirie.

Starburst: Have you had any interest in science fiction yourself?

Nelson: Yes, I've always been interested in science fiction. I don't think you could put me into the category of a hard-core fan. Ashley, and our publicist Craig Miller, go to the conventions all the time, and I've gone to maybe about five. But when you grow up in Milwaukee, there aren't a heck of a lot of science fiction conventions to go to.

Starburst: Mr Oswald, we're familiar with some of your work. The episodes of *The Outer Limits*, such films as *A Kiss Before Dying*, *80 Steps to Jonah*, *Bunny O'Hare*, and the semi-science fiction spy thriller, *Agent for H.A.R.M.*

Gerd Oswald: I'd just as soon forget that.

Starburst: It had a wonderful performance by

that Mexican fellow...

Oswald: Rafael Campos. He was pretty good. He's a wild one.

Starburst: Do you have a particular interest in science fiction yourself?

Oswald: Yes, I was always quite interested in it. I mean, after doing almost every other *Outer Limits* show, something had to rub off.

Starburst: How did you become involved in *Starhunt*?

Oswald: I was approached by these two gentlemen here, and I read the galley proof of the revised edition of the book. I felt it would lend itself very much to an exciting picture. I think it would be quite different from the genre of science fiction films that have been made in recent years. It's more like a naval thriller, in a way, like *The Enemy Below*, *The Caine Mutiny* — it has these elements in it.

Starburst: How extensive will the special effects be in *Starhunt*?

Grayson: They're going to look a lot more extensive than they really are. The computer material adds to the futuristic environment of the starship and doesn't cost us very much. There are some miniature shots of the ship, but they are not the same kind of thing that you would have to do if you wanted to make *The Empire Strikes Back*, where you have to improve on the wonderful miniature work of the first picture.

Starburst: They would essentially be part of the environment rather than the reason to see the movie?

Grayson: Yes. The whole purpose of the effects in *Starhunt* is to make you believe that this is really happening a thousand years from now on a starship.

Oswald: What's intriguing to me is that the effects are really secondary to the story's plot. Something you talk about, and see by the reaction on the people that are involved.

Starburst: In a sense, something like *The Outer Limits*, as they didn't have very much money for effects in those days.

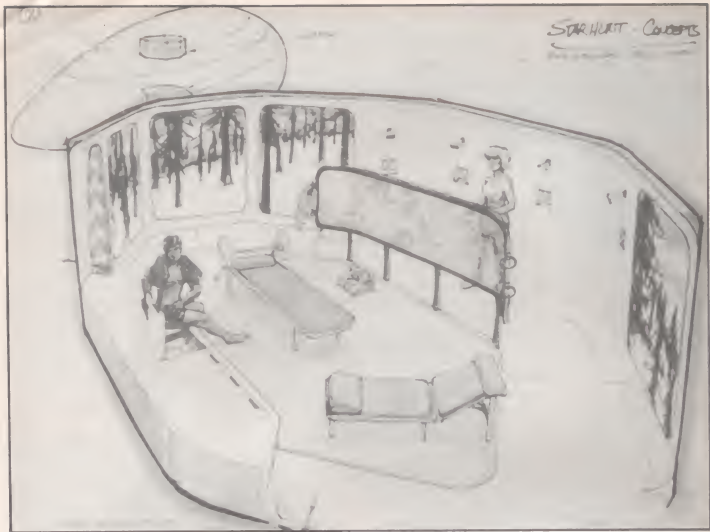
Oswald: Very much so. Toward the end of the second season, when we knew we weren't going to be renewed (because we'd had our time slot switched on us), United Artists, which financed the package, said "forget the special effects. There's no more money." We were forced to do the effects on the set, and inventively we came up with things you wouldn't believe could be done on the set. This was on some of the very good episodes, like *Soldier*, which was one of the Harlan Ellison episodes, and another with Robert Duvall, called *The Chameleon*.

Starburst: How close are you to production on *Starhunt*?

Grayson: The value of all unconsumed deals is zero. We have a lot of interest from distributors in the film, if we can make it. We have interest from some investment groups in backing the picture. But those deals will take place when they are signed, and I can't predict how long it will take for them to happen.

Starburst: Have you had any discussion of casting?

Grayson: We've had a lot of discussions, but the basic bottom line is that the movie is an ensemble piece, and it does not depend on star quality names in certain roles to make it work. In fact, the movie would probably be better if we don't have to suffer along with some particular actor or actress playing themselves rather than one of the characters in the story. Because it's the characters who



Above: The concept sketch for the crew's shower room. Opposite above: The design drawing for the bridge of the Roger Burlingame. Opposite below: Two concept paintings of dramatic scenes from the film *Starhunt*.

are exciting, in the way they interact with each other.

Oswald: We have given this area thought, and have explored the possibilities of a number of people who are within the reach of our budget. And also, we're looking towards an international cast. I'll give you some names at random. Herbert Lom, Curt Jurgens, Senta Berger — as far as Europeans are concerned. Henry Fonda, in a cameo bit as a doctor, Lloyd Bochner as the captain, names of that calibre. Really, ensemble-type players.

Starburst: What caused you to approach Gerd Oswald?

Nelson: Gerd had such great experience in getting a tremendous feeling of tension and claustrophobia and darkness on just those bare-wall sets that he had to work with about half the time on *Outer Limits* that if we were going to do a picture which involved almost everything happening on board a single ship, I thought it would be a good idea to get somebody who would be able to get that atmosphere across and work with it.

Starburst: What are some of the other Grayson Production Plans?

Grayson: We have a project to acquire one property every two months. We are currently planning a horror movie with the working title of *Nightmare Manor*. We have a distribution

agreement on it, and the distributor is going to put up half the financing of the film. This would give Grayson Productions, Inc. a screen credit as co-producer. We are also talking about doing one of Larry Niven's stories as one in the series of Public Broadcasting System science fiction movies, like *The Lathe of Heaven*. The PBS people are interested in it, but these PBS productions have to be funded by corporate contributions through tax-exempt foundations, and it may take a while in order to put that together.

Starburst: What Niven story would that be?

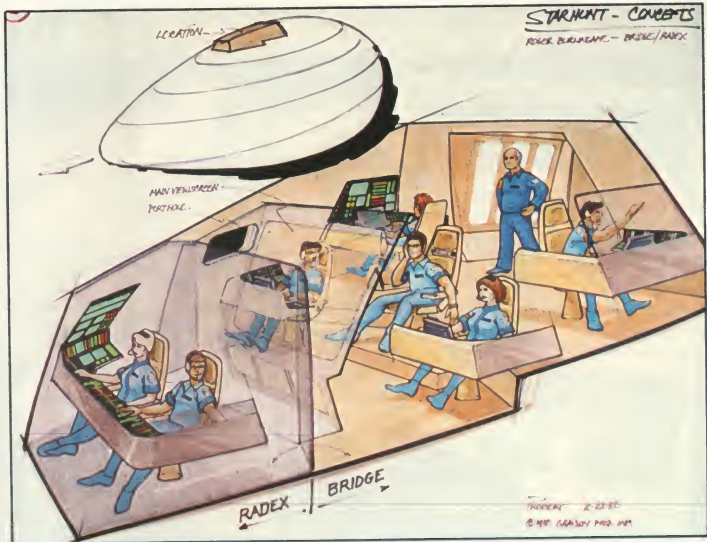
Grayson: The story that has everyone excited right now is *Inconstant Moon*. It's basically a character piece. I asked Larry if we could do one of his stories as a film project, and which would be good; he said, "By all means, use *Inconstant Moon*." Gerd, who has the experience in the movie business to know, said "That's a dynamite story! Let's do it." What we are trying to do now is make the necessary contacts with studios and networks and whatnot in order to carry on in the movie business. Without those contacts, we're not likely to get the deals hammered out that will enable us to put the money into the creative pot, to make the pictures and buy the properties. We're making a lot of headway, however. The fact that we have practically got

a deal on a 600,000 dollar picture after being in the business only six months is just amazing. It usually takes two years to get going in any business, even opening a fried chicken franchise.

The film is set during an interstellar war aboard the Roger Burlingame, a small and old military star cruiser that has been fitted and refitted so often the failsafe devices have begun to break down. Operations done automatically on newer ships are done aboard the Burlingame by hand and main strength.

The captain is an aging, ineffectual career officer whose main desire is to get a desk job. The first officer is a martinet who actually runs the ship, to the annoyance of the crew; he's anxious to prove himself in combat, and it looks like he may get his opportunity.

As Starburst opens, the Roger Burlingame is on the track of a strange "bogie"; presumably an enemy ship, which stops when they do but otherwise remains tantalizingly out of reach. As the Burlingame hunts the enemy ship, the crew begins to edge towards mutiny. They start to doubt that the ship exists at all—but also know that if they give up the hunt and return to base, the enemy ship will follow them. And so the tension mounts.



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